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Norman Podhoretz: Who's Afraid of the Christian Right?

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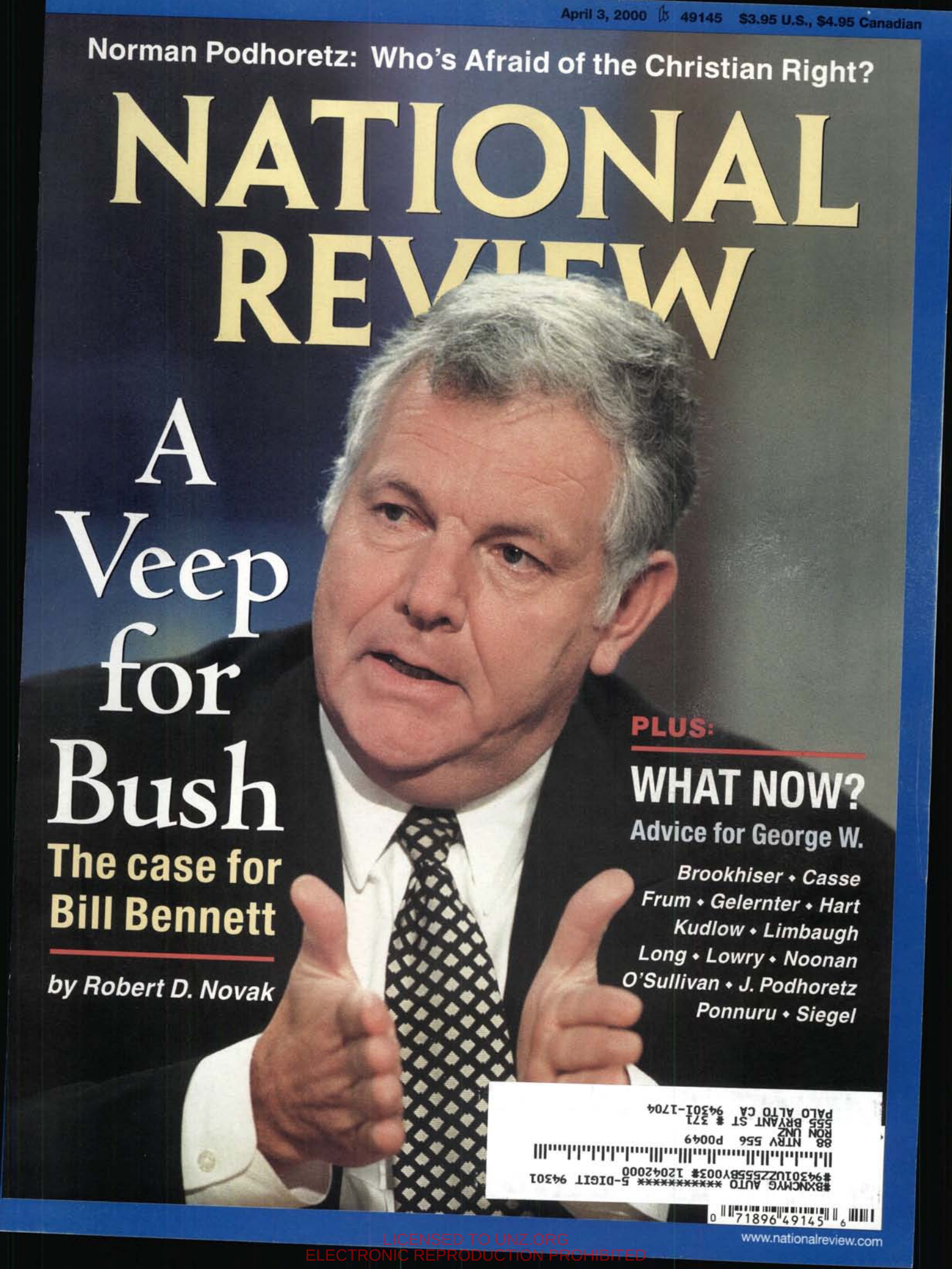

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The case for Bill Bennett

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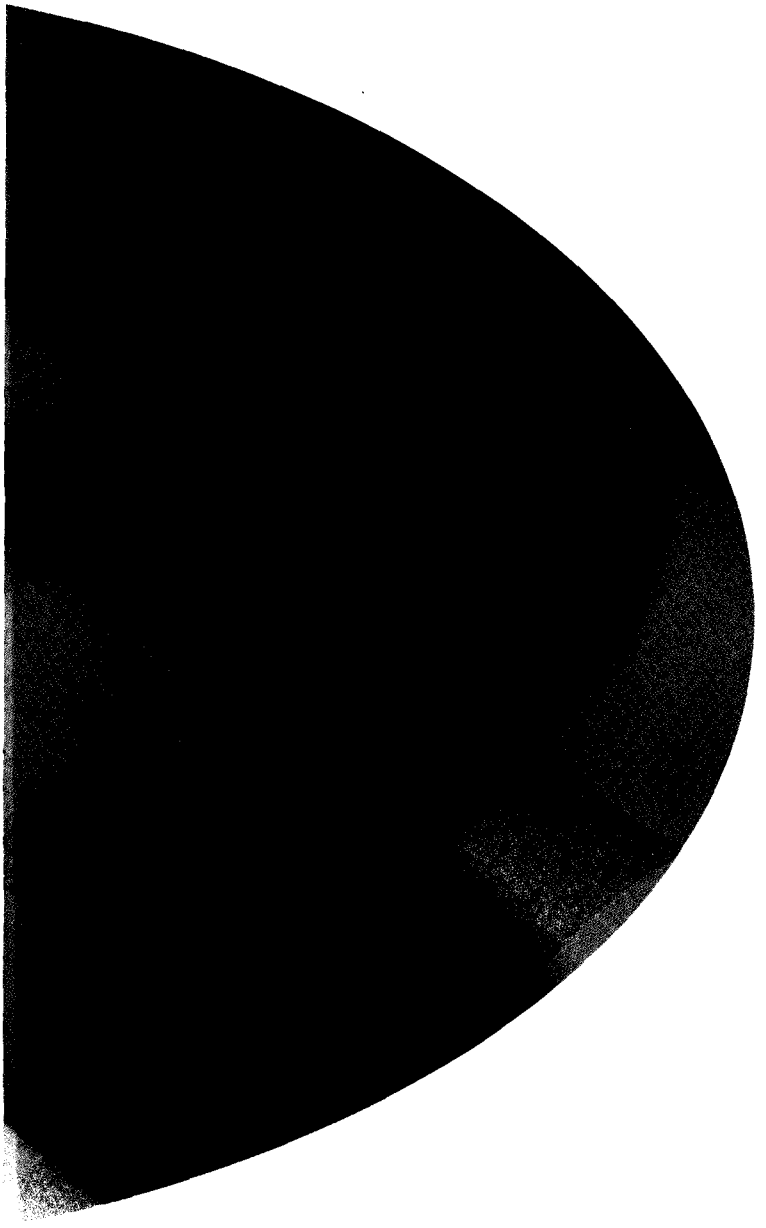

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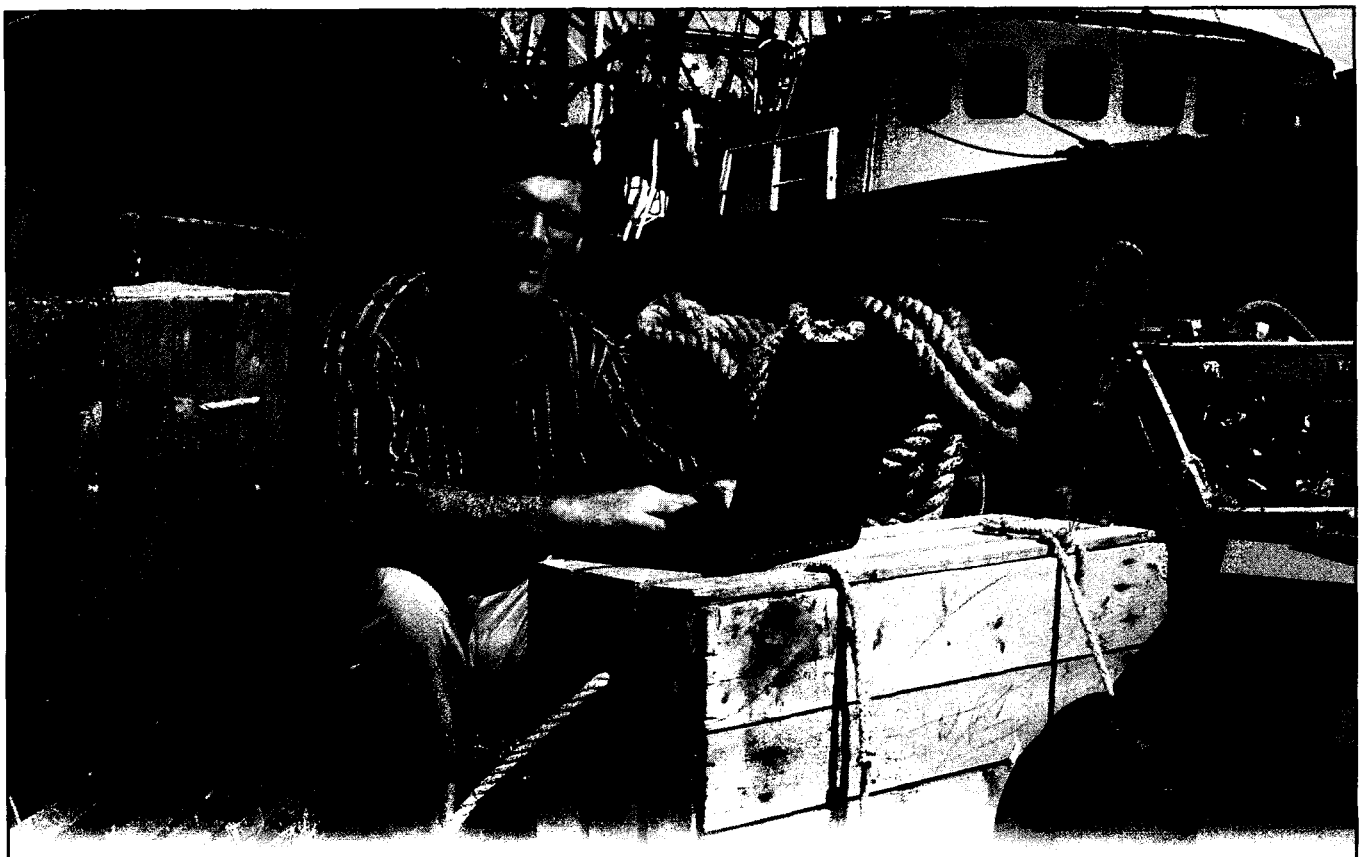

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■ LETTERS ■

THE GOP AND CHINA

Mark Helprin's essay ("East Wind," March 20) is an excellent overview of China's ambitions to displace a declining United States in the most vibrant region of the world, the Pacific Rim. The only flaw in the piece is that while Helprin recognizes the "venal" nature of President Clinton's engagement/appeasement policy, he doesn't mention that many Republicans have been just as guilty.

On March 6, for example, China's army newspaper published an article entitled "Taiwan Independence Means War," based on a speech by the vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission. This was just the latest in three weeks of constant threats, which included boasts that the U.S. could be driven out of East Asia in a war over Taiwan, with perhaps a few U.S. cities nuked in the process. The same day, the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call* reported on a new fundraising effort by the National Republican Congressional Committee aimed at high-tech firms that want to do business in China, touting the GOP's support for unrestricted trade with Beijing.

The party of Ronald Reagan that brought down the evil Communist empire in Europe no longer exists. We should be grateful the Soviet Union was never designated as an emerging market, or the Berlin Wall might still be standing. Too many corporations and PAC-dependent politicians would have had a vested commercial interest in keeping it up.

William R. Hawkins
Washington, D.C.

MARK HELPRIN RESPONDS: *Mr. Hawkins is quite right that Republicans as well as Democrats have the itch to sell gallows rope to China, but Republicans, accepting the legitimacy of national security, have exercised more self-control. Republicans did not abolish COCOM for export controls or push high-performance computers and satellite launches. Bernard Schwartz of Loral was not a Republican donor, but at one time the largest single donor to the Democrats. And, to their everlasting credit, Republicans are responsible for the Cox Committee, which, although virtually ignored by the press, has opened to public view the shameless betrayals that were in large part the subject of my article.*

A WINNING CONSERVATIVE STRATEGY

You were on the right track with your editorial "McCain and His Friends" (March 20). For Republicans to win the presidency and to retain control of Congress, they must have a unified message.

McCain's message was never a winner for the GOP. How could congressional candidates have united behind a campaign that labels them corrupt? The Bush message is education reform, tort reform, protecting and improving Social Security, and cutting taxes. It is a conservative message that can win not just the presidency but a larger majority in Congress.

Spec Bowers
Grantham, N.H.

A QUESTION OF TIMING

In the third-to-the-last paragraph of his authenticity piece ("The Trouble with Authenticity," March 6), Norman Podhoretz asserts: "There is no trace of sanctimoniousness in McCain." In fairness to Podhoretz, you should let us know how long ago he submitted that text.

Andrew B. Burns
Stamford, Conn.

SECESSION

Over a number of years, I have silently suffered the indignities of your periodic attacks on the traditional society of South Carolina and the flying of our battle flag. They are becoming both more frequent and shrill. With the publication of Dave Shiflett's "Rebels Yell" (Feb. 21), I must advise you that I will not renew my subscription to NATIONAL REVIEW.

Samuel W. Howell IV
Charleston, S.C.

FACTS AND COURAGE

Jay Nordlinger's convincing profile of Al Sharpton ("Power Dem," March 20) reminds us that facts can be redemptive—but only if they are mated to courage.

Ernest W. Lefever
Chevy Chase, Md.

EDITORS' NOTE: As surely every reader noticed, we ran the same Florence King column two issues in a row. While Florence King is always worth reprinting, and rereading, this was a mistake. We apologize to one and all, and hope you enjoy our fresh King, found, as usual, on the back page.

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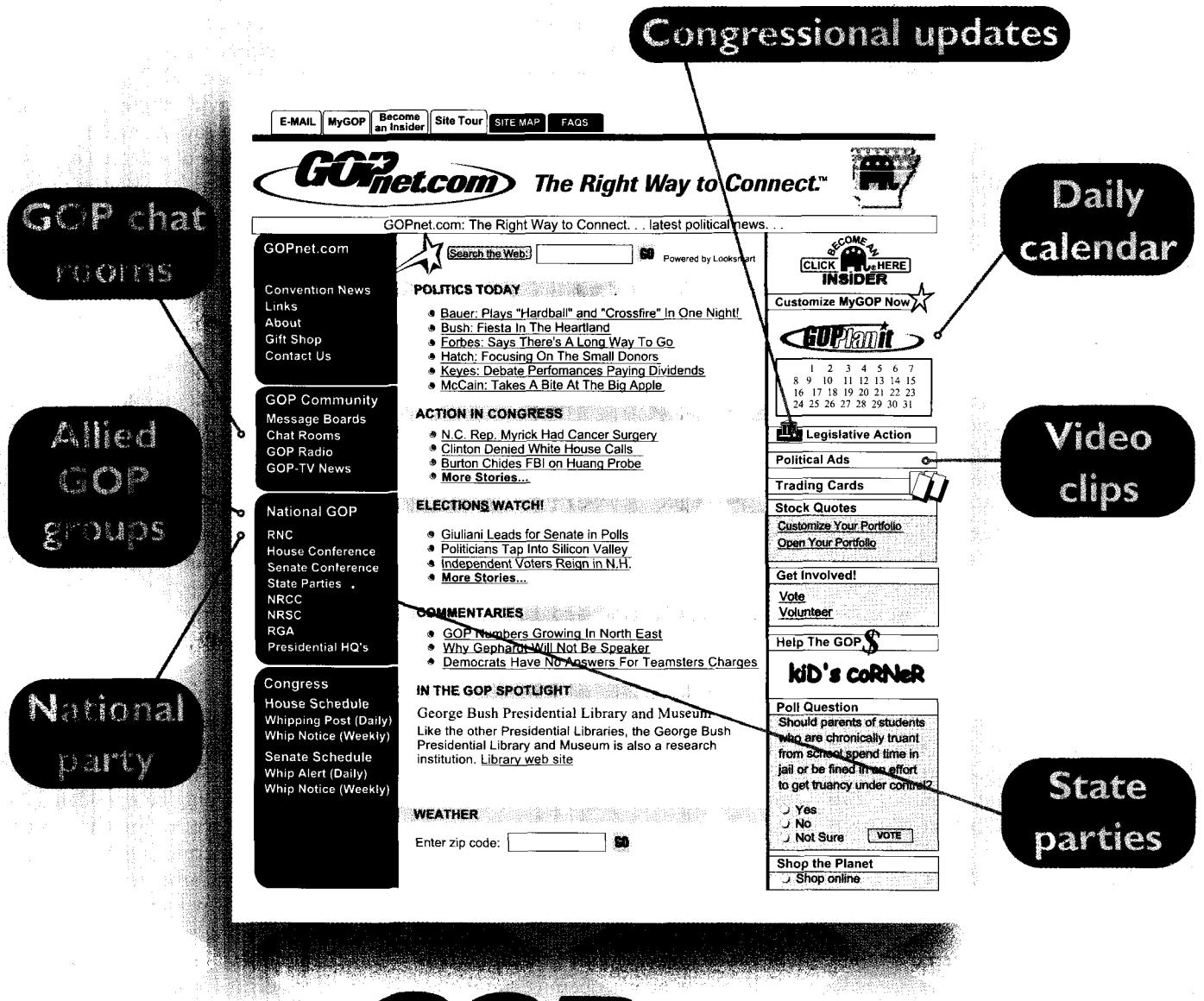

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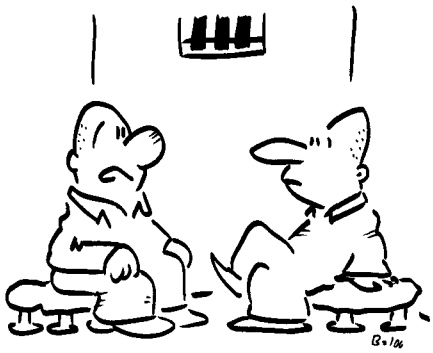
■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ As Justice Department considers bringing federal charges against New York City police officers following acquittal in **Diallo** case, President **Clinton** announces his verdict at San Francisco fundraiser: "I don't pretend for a moment to second-guess the jury . . . I know most people in America of all races believe that if it had been a young white man in an all-white neighborhood, it probably wouldn't have happened." . . . Democratic fundraiser **Terry McAuliffe** hopes to raise $10 million at tribute to Clinton in May, reports *New York Times*. . . . Former Clinton impeachment lawyer **Gregory Craig** becomes counsel for Cuban father of **Elián Gonzalez**.

■ In *The Hotline*'s survey of polls, **George W. Bush** leads Vice President **Gore** in 27 states worth 284 electoral votes and Gore leads Bush in 13 states worth 193 electoral votes (270 needed to win). . . . Gore, during photo op with black college students in Atlanta: "These students are from Morehouse and Spelman . . . the greatest colleges in the world." . . . Unnamed Gore adviser, in *U.S. News & World Report*: "The election campaign is going to be brutal, incredibly negative, nasty, dirty, slimy, sleazy, and one of the worst in history.". . . Columnist **Al Hunt** floats idea of former Senate majority leader **George Mitchell** as Gore running mate, in *Wall Street Journal*. . . . *Boston Herald* suggests other contenders include Sen. **Evan Bayh** of Indiana, Sen. **John Kerry** of Massachusetts, Energy secretary **Bill Richardson**, and Gov. **Jeanne Shaheen** of New Hampshire. . . . Sen. **Dick Durbin** of Illinois and Sen. **Bob Graham** of Florida received mentions elsewhere.

■ **John McCain**: "Under no circumstances would I consider being vice president." . . . McCain, on attack ads paid for by Bush confidant **Sam Wyly**: "This is one of the great scandals of American political history." . . . McCain on future presidential aspirations, in *Washington Post*: "If I was 43 or 53, it might be different. But I'm 63, a pretty old geezer. I can't see starting over with town meetings of 20 people." . . . Bush, on whether he "respects" Gore, in *USA Today*: "I don't respect much of what's gone on in the administration. I don't know him well enough as a person." . . . Bush weighs removal of plaque showing Confederate battle flag at Texas supreme court building. . . . **Alan Keyes** hits high-water mark with second-place finish in Minnesota caucus, edging out McCain. . . . Keyes, on the general election: "George Bush can't do it."

■ Rep. **Matthew Martinez** (D., Calif.) loses primary to state senator **Hilda Solis**. . . . Rep. **Tom Bliley** (R., Va.), head of House Commerce Committee, announces retirement, raising number of open GOP seats to 23, compared to 7 for Democrats. . . . Scottsdale lawyer



"I was afraid of this—accountability!"

Tom Liddy, son of **G. Gordon Liddy**, runs for Congress as Republican in district of retiring Rep. **Matt Salmon**. . . .Rep. **Michael Forbes** (D., N.Y.), who bolted GOP last summer, says he won't seek Right to Life nomination despite earning it in three previous elections. . . . **Jerry Falwell** promises to register 10 million "people of faith" by November.

■ Pro-abortion Florida legislators complain about prayer opening statehouse session asking God and Jesus to instill pols with "the desire to protect the unborn." . . . Kansas City to close four public schools next fall owing to increasing popularity of its 15 charter schools. . . . Maine legislature considers renaming Big Squaw Mountain, Squaw Bay, and Big and Little Squaw townships. . . . Federal panel calls North Carolina congressional district a "racial archipelago," forces state to redraw boundaries by May primary. . . . University of Miami eliminates men's swimming and diving programs, which produced four-time gold-medal Olympian Greg Louganis, to comply with gender-equity rules. . . . Federal judge throws out Denver's minority set-aside contracting rules, which city had spent $2 million defending in court. . . . Deportation arrests of illegal aliens drop from 22,000 two years ago to fewer than 9,000, according to the INS. . . . **David White** of National Flag Foundation says many schools are abandoning Pledge of Allegiance: "It's a nationwide problem.". . . **Madonna** wins *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval, graces cover of April issue; tells **Liz Smith**: "I dealt with my sexual rebellion. I worked it out of my system." . . . News Corp. is offering its second annual **Eric Breindel** Award, named for the late editorial-page editor of the *New York Post*. The award goes to the opinion writer whose work best reflects the values—principally courage, moral clarity, and witness-bearing—that animated Breindel's own writings. At $10,000, it is the most generous award of its kind. Applications and nominations should be sent by March 31 to: The Eric Breindel Memorial Foundation, 1211 Avenue of the Americas, 3rd Floor, New York, N.Y. 10036.

■ In *Der Spiegel*, **Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn** says Clinton's suggestion that **Boris Yeltsin** was "the father of Russian democracy" can only be considered "a sick joke." . . . Egypt to become second Arab country permitting women to divorce husbands (other is Tunisia). . . . India plans 28 percent increase in defense spending. . . . Italy's highest court rules that unsolicited toying with someone else's foot—a.k.a. playing "footsie"—is permissible.

■ Pollster **Frank Luntz** on the presidential campaign: "One of the things Americans are looking for is an individual that they can like, that they feel is friendly and kind, and all of those things that you think of when you think of puppies and kittens." **NR**

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THE WEEK

■ The French civil service, living up to their nation's reputation for linguistic purism, have banned the words "e-mail" and "start-up," replacing them with equivalent French neologisms. Of course, the bureaucrats are still allowed to use the indispensable French word *chômage*, which means unemployment.

■ Bill Bradley left the Democratic race Super Wednesday without winning one primary. His life has been a long decline—from earnest Princeton star, to solid Knick, to dull and disappointing senator, to dull and demagogic candidate. Bradley's vulgar reverse-racism—he kissed the Rev. Sharpton's pinkie early and openly—was muffled only by the low-watt persona that was a product of his priggish self-esteem. The 1964–65 college basketball season remains: fleeting, now distant, but still, somehow, eternal.

■ That was a sharp question Jeff Greenfield asked at the last Democratic presidential debate: How could Bradley and Al Gore justify their overtures to Al Sharpton given the outrage they have shown (or feigned) over George W. Bush's campaign stop at Bob Jones University? First Gore said that "in America we believe in redemption"; he provided no evidence, of course, that any has taken place. Then he said, "I did not meet with Reverend Sharpton publicly. I met with him privately." (Doesn't that make it worse, not better?) "And, you know, there is a racial divide in the way people in different races perceive certain events. I would not be so quick to completely dismiss what he has to say about some of these issues." (So: It's a black thing, you wouldn't understand.) "Look at the number of rabbis who went to join Reverend Sharpton in his organizing of demonstrations and pickets following the Abner Louima case . . . " (Some of his best friends are rabbis.) It was Bradley, however, who won the pander prize: "It sometimes takes someone that rubs a part of the population the wrong way in order to get the attention focused on the issue at hand. I view his activities in that light. . . . That's where I think you have to see him, in that tradition of civil rights in this country." (Sure, part of the population objects when someone incites murder and falsely accuses law-enforcement officials of rape. But Martin Luther King was controversial too.) Disgraceful.

■ Gary Bauer entered Republican presidential politics because he wanted to be an advocate for socially conservative positions in a contest where, he believed, they were not being adequately expounded. He left it the ineffectual and embarrassed camp follower of losing candidate John McCain. After Bauer gave up his own race, he endorsed McCain; he stood at McCain's side when the senator compared Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell to Louis Farrakhan and Al Sharpton on the eve of the Virginia primary. Bauer wrote an op-ed piece for the *New York Times* defending the McCain speech. Only after McCain further called Robertson and Falwell "evil"—and only after he lost decisively in Virginia—did Bauer clean his ears and recognize that McCain's attacks were "unwarranted, ill-advised, and divisive." McCain had been toadying to the Left; Bauer was the toady of the toady. Self-imagined purists should not themselves run for office: Leave the volte-faces and switchbacks of politics to those who have taken it up professionally.

■ The Republican party may be in poor shape in California, but conservatism is alive and well. In the state's primary on March 7, 61 percent of voters supported the codification of marriage as a heterosexual institution—confirming that gay marriage can't win a vote anywhere outside a courtroom. Voters also beat back the latest attempt to weaken Proposition 13, the 1978 measure that put limits on taxes, spending, and bond issuance. And Ron Unz's campaign-finance reform lost by a landslide. The exit polls told another heartening story: "Clinton fatigue" turns out to be a real phenomenon. Only 17 percent of the voters who disapprove of Clinton personally backed Gore—and the disapprovers were 61 percent of the electorate. On abortion, meanwhile, only 30 percent of voters agreed with Al Gore's position (that it should be legal "always"); most voters with lukewarm views on the subject supported pro-life Republicans, not pro-choice Democrats. If Republicans cannot succeed in California, it's not the fault of the state's voters.

■ Who should join in piling on George W. for his supposed anti-Catholicism but the Log Cabin Republicans. The gay group cut an ad that said, "Bush went to Bob Jones University, a place that teaches intolerance against the Catholic Church, gays, and minorities." Next: a Catholic/Log Cabin symposium on St. Sebastian: "Martyr or Object of Desire?"

■ To date, the only person facing criminal penalties in the wake of President Clinton's misdeeds is the whistle-blower who started it all, Linda Tripp. The woman who should have been a poster-child for feminist groups—a single mother of two and career civil servant singled out for "speaking truth to power"—could instead go to jail or pay a hefty fine for exposing behavior that made Bob

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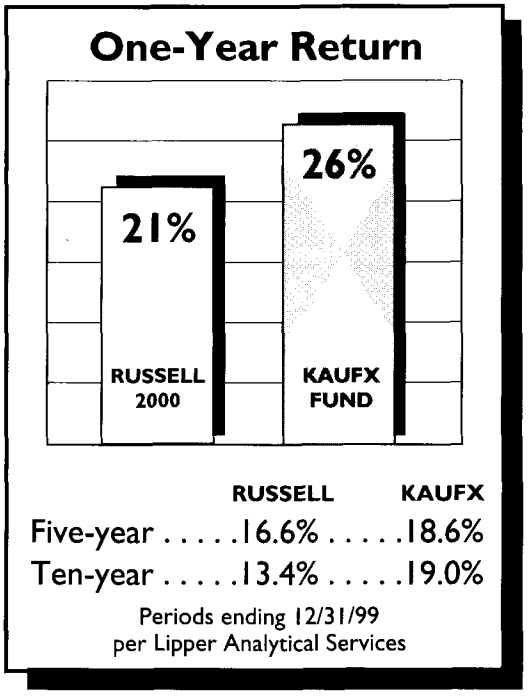

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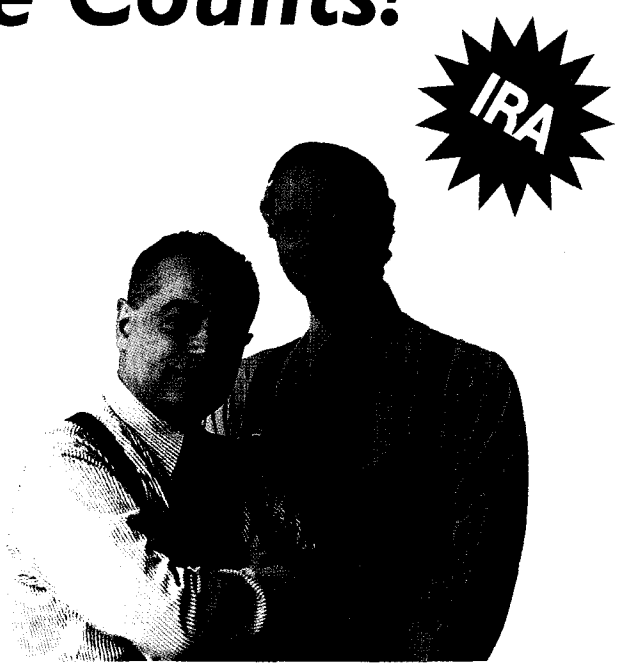

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Packwood's career-ending foibles seem tame. The silver lining is that she may take a few people with her. District judge Royce C. Lamberth ordered the Defense Department to produce all records, including phone logs and e-mails "to or from any member of the media," concerning the illegal release of Tripp's confidential security file. The same administration that decried Ken Starr's "systematic illegal leaks" deliberately leaked Tripp's file to *The New Yorker*. Which is a crime—even if committed against Linda Tripp.

■ Discontent over rising gas prices has led the administration to talk to OPEC countries about increasing production. Officials such as energy secretary Bill Richardson speak as though we were asking for a favor. But OPEC is the worst kind of coercive cartel, and we ought to break it on principle. One of the reasons we fought the Gulf War, after all, was to maintain a somewhat free market in oil. At home, meanwhile, we can cut gas taxes and ease restrictions on drilling. High oil prices are not just an inconvenience. A price rise has been associated with all three recessions America has experienced in the last three decades. Al Gore should take note that in each case, the incumbent party lost the White House.

■ Every month, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan seems to find something new to fret about. "Irrational exuberance" in the stock market; overconsumption; lax banking practices; and now excess productivity. The most charitable interpretation of Greenspan's latest remarks is that he is arguing that rising productivity can have discordant effects over time. That is, expectations of future productivity growth cause stock prices to rise now; and stockholders spend the money before the productivity improvements have occurred. So, for a while, too much money is chasing too few goods: the classic recipe for inflation. But is any of this in fact happening? Investment is keeping up with consumption, which suggests that there will be enough goods to meet demand. There is a larger point here as well. Inflation is bad for the economy not least because it introduces "noise" into the price system and creates a new element of unpredictability. Greenspan's much-publicized theoretical musings are now having the same effects—which is why he should desist.

■ Democratic members of a House commerce subcommittee tried to keep the press and public out of a March 9 hearing on the black market in fetal body parts. That's because even pro-abortion pols have trouble defending what they saw the previous evening on ABC's *20/20*: a hidden-camera exposé of Missouri pathologist Miles Jones hawking fetal brains for $999, spinal cords for $325, eyes for $75, and so on. Tissues and organs may be donated for research, but it is illegal to sell them—exactly what Jones does for a living. Still, some Democrats couldn't resist attacking pro-lifers: "I am concerned that the charges leveled today, while serious and troubling, are also being used by pro-life groups to inflame the abortion debate," sputtered California representative Lois Capps. Of course, pro-abortion politicians wish there were no debate at all; that's why they try to close hearings. In this case they failed. And on March 10, the FBI launched an investigation into the peddling of fetal body parts—a small victory for pro-lifers.

■ The Senate confirmed Richard Paez and Marsha Berzon to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals—"finally," the newspapers said. The papers, and the Democrats, also called the confirmations a victory for Hispanics and women; and so it was, at least for those Hispanics and women who don't mind seeing the power of their votes diluted by meddling judges. Supporters of the nominations said that there was no evidence that either Paez or Berzon would legislate from the bench. But Paez, as a district judge, has struck down a Los Angeles law against aggressive panhandling for infringing on free speech. (The law was passed after a man was stabbed to death for refusing a panhandler. As Ann Coulter has written in *Human Events*, "Just hope Judge Paez doesn't get his hands on any laws against extortion, bribery or robbery. 'Stick 'em up' could become constitutionally protected speech.") As for Berzon, she was long affiliated with the ACLU and the Brennan Center for Justice, which basically exist to promote judicial legislating. The damage from the confirmations will be limited only because the Ninth Circuit is already a lost cause. It will continue to be routinely overturned by the Supreme Court—at least until President Gore appoints a few justices.

■ Two-year-old Khalil Shanti was born in Jordan to a Jordanian father and a Puerto Rican mother. Last July, the mother fled with little Khalil to the U.S., claiming that her husband had abused her. The boy's father turned up in Miami five months later and filed for custody of the child. A family-court judge ruled that the boy should go back to Jordan, where custody could be decided by a Jordanian court. (The actual return of the child to his native country

The LaBella Memo

Thought to have been swallowed by
Janet Reno when
Buddhist nuns made such a fuss,
It's turned up again
In a lockbox Janet keeps
Near her no-no file.
Beltway buzz suggests it could
Wipe off Al Gore's smile.

—W. H. von Dreele

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has been stayed pending an appeal by his mother.) The *New York Times* drew a lengthy parallel to the case of Elián Gonzalez, wheeling out a professor of immigration law to lay down the party line: "We hate Castro and we don't hate King Abdullah. . . . The Gonzalez case was only put into question because of the reluctance of the federal government to deal with Cuba as it deals with Jordan or any other country." Any other country that has a functioning parliament and judiciary? Any other country that permits the father in such a case to come to the U.S. to fight for his child? The *Times*'s own reporter observes helpfully that "few people in Miami fly the Jordanian flag from their car's radio antenna, and no one here, it seems, is willing to lie down in front of traffic to prevent Khalil's return to Amman." Possibly because Jordan was never taken over by a gang of revolutionary fanatics who caused tens of thousands of her citizens to flee in terror and imprisoned the rest in a Communist police state.

■ President Clinton is right to stop over in Pakistan. He may be there long enough to reflect on the murder of Iqbal Radh, a lawyer briefed to defend Nawaz Sharif, the deposed prime minister accused of crimes for which he may face the death penalty. Three gunmen entered the lawyer's office and killed him at point-blank range. They then made their getaway in the type of vehicle used by the government security apparatus. In an unrelated incident 48 hours later, an assassin in central Teheran shot down Saeed Hajjarian, key adviser to Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, and a leading reformer in the struggle against the Islamic hard-liners precariously clinging to power after the recent elections. Once again, the gunman and his driver escaped on a motorcycle used exclusively by the security services. In Iran, as in Pakistan, official spokesmen have expressed grief and shock over what seems likely to be terrorism authorized at the highest level. President Clinton asserts that American "interests and values" will be advanced through "contact with and communications with" Pakistan. Of course they conduct politics differently in those parts of the world, but perhaps for once he needn't choose his words too carefully.

■ On the first Sunday of Lent, Pope John Paul II held a ceremony in which he acknowledged that sons and daughters of the Catholic Church had behaved sinfully in the past by contributing to divisions among Christians, coercing nonbelievers, and persecuting Jews. The Pope's action was widely misunderstood. The editors of the *New York Times* seemed to believe that the Pope was apologizing to them for the failure of the Church to conform to modern liberal standards. (The apology was not accepted.) In fact, the Pope was pleading for God's forgiveness of all Catholics who had failed to live lives worthy of the truth authoritatively taught by the Church—and inviting others to engage in a comparable act of self-examination, confession, and repentance, acknowledging that all of us have in myriad ways betrayed the moral truths that we profess. Also otiose was the complaint that the Pope did not acknowledge that the Church itself, and not just its members, had sinned. In Catholic ecclesiology, the Church is the mystical Body of Christ, and thus sin cannot be imputed to it. The complaints and confusions may cloud, but cannot diminish, the example of courage and honesty John Paul has set.

■ The sickness in the souls of some black folk was laid bare by Ronald Taylor, the 39-year-old black man who shot five white strangers (three fatally) in Wilkinsburg, Pa. While Taylor was on the rampage, he told a black woman, "I'm not gonna hurt any black people, I'm gonna kill all white people"; his apartment contained anti-white rantings. This should be no surprise: Evil stalks the world, looking for guises, including racism of all vectors. Is there a malady in the souls of white *and* black folk that seals their eyes and lips when such things happen? "He was very angry apparently at a lot of different things," the Wilkinsburg police chief said in an emollient *Today* show interview, "but one can draw a lot of different conclusions from that." Sure, but one of the conclusions has to be that Ronald Taylor hated white people. Black racist crimes are never recognized instantly, and must be gross to be recognized at all. That may be a good thing in a multiracial society. But we should at the same time discourage witch hunts for white racism, black bigots (like Al Sharpton), and bigoted black pop culture (like certain rappers).

■ No doubt many readers recall the Great Blackout of 1965, when New York City was plunged into darkness for several hours. Nine months later maternity units were swamped with patients. Doris Day made a very silly movie about the phenomenon. Such innocent times! Recent newspaper reports in both Britain and the U.S. tell of a surge in abortions during January and February this year. In the absence of any blackouts, the only explanation anyone has been able to come up with is that a lot of people got carried away during the millennium celebrations. This, in spite of the British government having put out public-service ads for weeks ahead, advising citizens to stock up on contraceptives and "morning after" abortifacients. Who knew that the human glandular system was not Y2K-compliant? If there is a movie to be made about this, we'd rather not see it.

■ To mark International Women's Day, feminists ransacked Montreal's Mary Queen of the World Catholic cathedral, spray-painting antireligious slogans on the church's façade, leaving condoms in the sanctuary, destroying paintings with soiled sanitary napkins, ripping pages out of hymnals, and stealing altar cloths. The vandals could not be prosecuted under the city's hate-crimes law, a police spokesman said, because it does not apply to people who "in good faith" attempt "to establish by argument an opinion on a religious subject." One might have thought that looting and stealing

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were crimes whatever their context—but then, that's the trouble with hate-crimes laws.

■ Richard Jewell was the Atlanta security guard who was tried and convicted in the press for the 1996 bombing at the summer Olympics (what does he look like? overweight good ol' boy; where does he live? with his mother—suspicious), until the FBI finally exonerated him. Mr. Jewell has now been hired by the Jefferson, Ga., police department, where he will have to follow much stricter standards of procedure than his tormentors.

■ Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-mei has died at 98, in exile in Connecticut. He was the Catholic bishop of Shanghai and was imprisoned for 30 years by China's Communists because he advocated religious liberty. Pope John Paul II secretly named him a cardinal in 1979 and made the promotion public in 1991. Cardinal Kung can stand as a symbol of the 20th century: He was born in 1901 and survived the most brutal of centuries by a couple of months, serving all along as a messenger of hope in the face of unimaginable tyranny. It is regrettable that he did not also live to see the end of the tyrannous regime that oppresses his country. But his example offers hope to the Chinese people. R.I.P.

■ Coca-Cola's new CEO Doug Daft has announced the company will link executive pay to "diversity." Coming soon: An office of diversity and a vice president of diversity strategies. We liked the old Coke better.

CAMPAIGN 2000

From This Moment On

"We have two newly established leaders in the Republican party," says Sen. Chuck Hagel, a supporter of John McCain, adding that George W. Bush and McCain "together will lead the Republican party." Well, no. For McCain to have established himself as a Republican leader, he would have had to get Republican votes in the primaries. This he signally failed to do. He did not get a majority of Republicans in any primary. Often, Bush beat him by 2-to-1 or 3-to-1.

Still, McCain attracted some independent voters and Democrats, and winning the "McCain vote" is said to be the key to the election. Bush is being counseled that he must move in McCain's direction by taking up campaign-finance reform. But Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew poll, has pointed out the flaw in this analysis: There is no McCain vote. McCain's supporters do not constitute a bloc that can be defined by ideology, demographics, or shared interests.

It was McCain's persona that fueled his campaign: the scrappy insurgent, the stand-up guy, the POW, the penitent pol. In the exit polls, very few voters said they had made their decision based on campaign-finance reform. What many voters *were* looking for was a candidate who stood up for his beliefs. These voters went heavily for McCain. Gore and Bush were both seen, by majorities in their respective parties, as people who did not say what they believed. Bush will gain a reputation for steadfastness if he argues with passion for causes in which he does believe—tax cuts, missile defense, accountability for schools—even when the TV people say those causes are unpopular.

Bush will not improve his reputation by an opportunistic embrace of campaign-finance reforms he has heretofore denounced. Reverting to "compassionate conservatism" will not help either, as it sounds like an attempt to be all things to all people; it is soft rather than scrappy. Both of those flawed alternatives, however, start from a correct premise: The existing Republican coalition and a conventionally conservative campaign will not suffice to win a national election.

Bush can expand the coalition by adopting elements of McCain's insurgent style. He could lead a crusade, for instance, against welfare for corporations that make more than a million dollars in profits. But since McCain's supporters are not a bloc vote, Bush will need to attract more clearly defined groups, groups that may not even have existed when Ronald Reagan created the present Republican coalition. There are millions of new investors who would like the federal government to stop heaping taxes on them for trying to build a future for their families—and who will not take kindly to any suggestion by Gore that cutting those taxes would be risky or selfish. In today's entrepreneurial economy, independent contractors could also use some relief from federal burdens.

New Economy voters want an Internet free of special taxes, a commitment that Bush has not yet made. They favor free trade, which Bush can support more strongly than Gore can. They may also be receptive to the idea that the gales of creative destruction that have ripped through the private sector should touch the federal government as well. If Bush promises to scrap its 16 pay grades and scores of antiquated programs, he will both expose the insignificance of Gore's "Reinventing Government" project and pin Gore to an unattractive status quo. Like McCain, he will have a bold reform plan that poses no threat to voters.

Finally, Bush needs to keep an eye on Patrick Buchanan, stealing his best ideas (such as support for teaching all American children English) and attacking his worst ones (taxing international commerce). Isolate Buchanan on the left, where he can poach union members from Gore's coalition.

The best campaign strategy imaginable, however, will not change the likelihood that Gore will have peace and prosperity on his side in November. But as Kate O'Beirne points out in this issue, he is a weak candidate. Bush was able to maintain a lead over Gore in the polls even during the most bruising days of the primary season. Gore's political instincts are shaky. He is attacking Reaganomics, gun rights, and religious conservatives—the precise strategy that the Democrats adopted in the 1994 campaign that lost them Congress. In touting campaign-finance reform, Gore seems to be misreading McCain's success; and unlike McCain, Gore explicitly supports public financing of campaigns, a deeply unpopular idea.

Bush can win this election—by making new friends, not betraying old ones.

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SCANDAL WATCH

Monk-y Business

THE succession of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe in the White House is known as the Virginia Dynasty. If Al Gore follows Bill Clinton it will be the Crook Dynasty. Gore is a Clintonian sleazebag without charm or sex appeal.

In the last election cycle, the vice president made 45 money-raising phone calls from his office. Gore claimed that there was "no controlling legal authority" that prohibited his hustling, although the statute that bans solicitations in federal offices, the Pendleton Act, had been on the books since 1883. Members of Congress routinely pop across the street from their offices to rattle their donors' cash boxes (Gore was first elected to Congress in the 1970s). Did he think the law lapsed once he moved into the West Wing? Janet Reno's Justice Department sided with Gore, on the grounds that all his calls had been made to raise soft money.

But were they? Notes of a 1995 fundraising powwow in the Map Room showed that both hard and soft money was to be raised; that Gore volunteered to make calls; and that he followed the discussions closely. Gore first denied having been at the meeting, then said he must have missed the sexy parts since he took so many bathroom breaks on account of all the iced tea he drank. Janet Reno once again came to the rescue, deciding there was only "weak circumstantial evidence" that Gore could see what was happening in front of his nose.

Charles G. LaBella, chief of the Justice Department's campaign-finance task force, wrote a 94-page memo in 1998, ripping his colleagues for "gamesmanship," "contortions," and "intellectual dishonesty" in refusing to investigate the matter further, or to appoint an independent counsel to do so. The Justice Department, LaBella charged, had a double standard, rounding up small fry while the president, the vice president, the First Lady, and top aide Harold Ickes got free passes.

An example of the two-tier system in action came with the conviction in March of Maria Hsia, a Taiwanese-born immigration consultant and Democratic fundraiser who steered Gore through his fundraising visit to the Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights, Calif., in April 1996. The DNC got $65,000 in illegal contributions from that foray, supposedly "donated" by monks and nuns who had taken vows of poverty. Gore didn't conclude, from the robes and statuary, that he might be in a religious establishment that could not legally make campaign contributions. Maybe he drank too much green tea. Hsia could get up to 25 years in prison; Gore's tawdry evasions—he first described the temple visit as "community outreach"—have been allowed to stand.

Although the LaBella memo has been sealed by the Justice Department, excerpts from it appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on March 10. When Gore was asked about it, he relied on a defense perfected by George Stephanopoulos in the first Clinton campaign: "That's old news. That was all reviewed years ago." Stonewall, then pretend you've outlasted the statute of limitations.

The Gore record reveals the hollowness of the current crusade, by Sen. McCain and the media, for campaign-finance reform. New laws will not restrain politicians who break the laws we already have. Gore lifts corruption to the level of farce by now saying that the "pain" of his past "mistakes" gives him a "passion" for reform. But at every stage of inquiry, he has denied that he has made mistakes. And he has felt no pain: Janet Reno protects him from investigation, and his character armors him against embarrassment.

Clinton's defense in the great crisis of his presidency was that it was all "about sex." Gore's will be that he, and others, took part in a broken system. No: The vice president, judging from the available evidence, is a uniquely dishonest offender. It's time he was questioned by the press, and by the law.

IT'S AN AFFLICTION

Maria Hsia excites a tic
In Al Gore's body-politic:
Newspaper stories cause an ab
To quiver slightly, while a stab
That strikes the sacroiliac
When staffers scream, "Maria's back!"
Can trigger podium distress.
If W. can use, God bless.

—W. H. VON DREELE

PUBLIC POLICY

Gun Rites

THE ritual has become familiar: another horrific shooting, another round of calls for gun control. But this time, the calls sounded tinnier than usual. The perp, though a six-year-old boy, already had a history of violence. He lived, effectively parentless, in a crack house; he got the gun from there. President Clinton responded to the boy's shooting of a classmate by renewing his call for legislation that would . . . regulate gun shows and require trigger locks. This was too much even for Greta van Susteren, as friendly an interviewer for Clinton as can be imagined. She suggested that a trigger lock would not stay on a gun in such an environment. Responded Clinton, lamely, "I'm not at all sure that even a callous, irresponsible drug dealer with a six-year-old kid in the house wouldn't leave a child trigger lock on a gun."

All passion has left the gun-control debate in Washington; it is now solely a matter of political calculation. Dick Gephardt and other leading House Democrats demand that the House

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Think about it.

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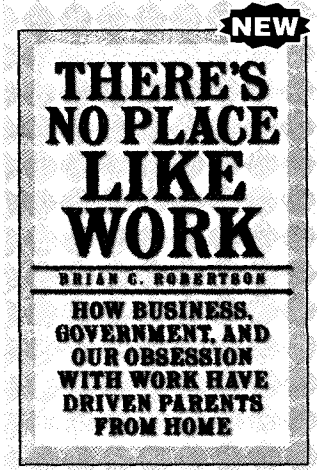
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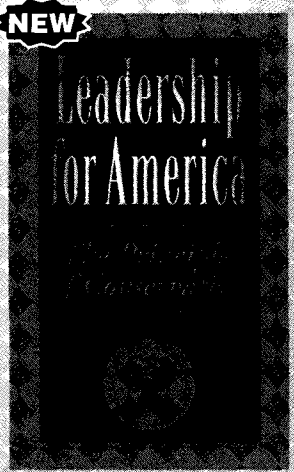

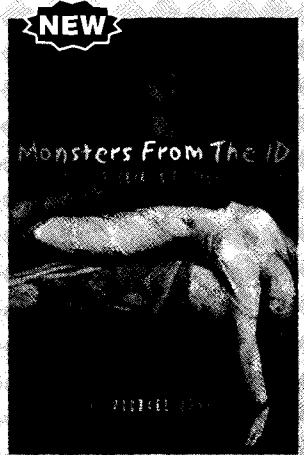

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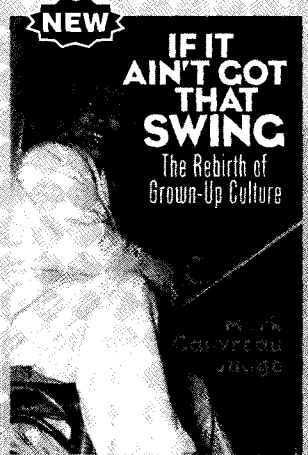

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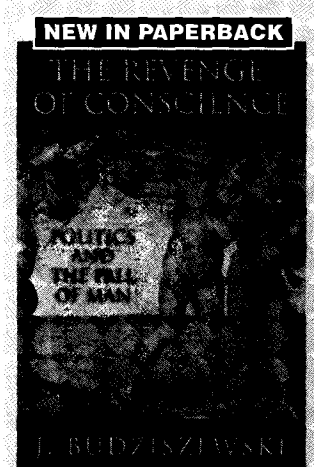

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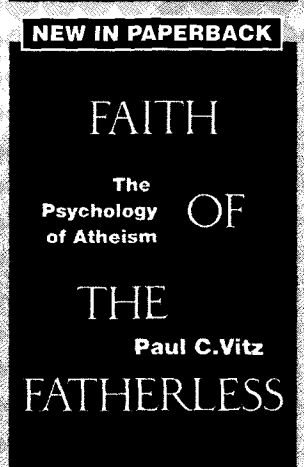

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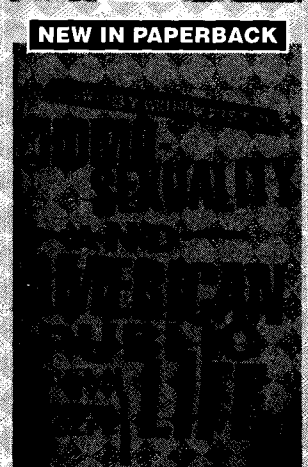

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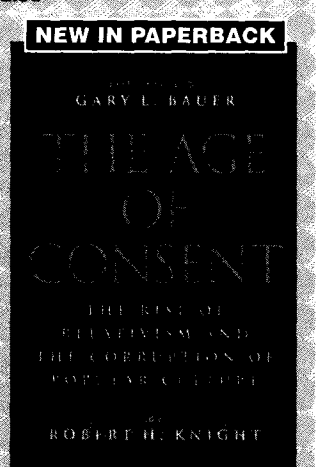

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vote on "gun safety" measures at least as strong as those already passed by the Senate. But the House itself has already voted *against* those provisions, and by large margins. So Gephardt is effectively insisting that the House reconsider a bill that cannot pass. The purpose is to scare suburban women by painting the Republicans as trigger-happy.

A few nervous Republicans want to counter this campaign by passing a bill that deals only with trigger locks. That, they think, would "take the issue off the table." It wouldn't; Clinton would just make a new demand at the signing ceremony. Besides, there is reason to think that Gephardt has miscalculated. So far, the agitation for gun control has served mainly to swell the coffers of the National Rifle Association. Its officials expect to have 3.5 million members by Election Day.

Republicans, meanwhile, have found a winning message on guns: that we need to enforce existing laws, not write new ones. Juveniles with legal guns, according to the Justice Department, commit fewer crimes than juveniles without guns—and, of course, far fewer crimes than juveniles with illegal guns. Yet prosecutions for weapons violations have fallen under Clinton. A recent Zogby poll found that 68.3 percent of Americans would prefer a candidate promising tougher enforcement to one promising tighter controls; only 29 percent expressed the opposite preference. There is no need to wobble.

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: In my lifetime I've survived World War II, seasickness and rock 'n' roll (they have the same effect), and a sting on the tongue by a crazed yellow jacket that found its way into a can of beer I was drinking last summer.

After all that, it is a strange counterpoint to admit that I'm often disturbed by the use or misuse of that tiny curvature known as the comma.

In your introductions to *Amo, Amas, Amat and More* and *When the Going Was Good!*, you are William F. Buckley (comma) Jr. However, on the NR masthead you are William F. Buckley Jr.

William Strunk Junior, in *The Elements of Style*, offers this rule of usage regarding the comma:

"Although Junior, with its abbreviation Jr., has commonly been regarded as parenthetical, logic suggests that it is, in fact, restrictive and therefore not in need of a comma."

As a reader of NR since its birth and a subscriber nearly as long, I long ago came to the conclusion that you are a master of English grammar. Do you agree or disagree with Strunk?

Cordially,
George J. Murphy
Rochester, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Murphy: I agree. Though I did not come analytically to the reason to do without the comma. It was one of the style rules of the *Yale Daily News* when I became a junior editor in 1946.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Do you have any views on separated appositives?

In a report in Montreal's *Gazette*, headed "Surgeon Ordered to Pay for Death," a paragraph reads: "Donald Paterson's widow sued Rubinovich for $300,000 but lost. . . . The appeal court overturned that ruling and awarded Carol Kimmis $90,000."

It struck me as unfair that the widow won on appeal, yet the money was awarded to someone else. Ah, but you see, Carol Kimmis is not someone else—she *is* the widow Paterson. Surely the reporter should have written, "Paterson's widow, Carol Kimmis."

In my retirement project of reading *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, I find that Gibbon's appositives sometimes wander, e.g.:

"Superior to the last temptation of virtuous minds, an indiscreet and intemperate zeal for justice, [Julian] restrained, with calmness and dignity, the warmth of an advocate who prosecuted, for extortion, the president of the Narbonnese province. 'Who will ever be found guilty,' exclaimed the vehement Delphidius, 'if it be enough to deny?' "

I guess Delphidius is the name of the advocate, especially with the adjective "vehement," but maybe it's the name of one of Julian's advisers that I happened to forget from an earlier page. Anyway, why should I have to guess?

Yours sincerely,
Lionel Albert
Knowlton, Quebec

Dear Mr. Albert: Interesting that you refer to the problem as one of separated appositives. To qualify as such, I think, the equivalent is supposed to appear right alongside: as in, "Michelangelo, painter, genius, was distracted." The referent seems clear in the *Gazette* article, and not too hard to decipher in the other passage you cite.

But maybe that's only because I'm too cowardly to pass negative judgment on Gibbon.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: "And indeed, most people accept more readily being called clever, when they are knaves, than being called fools when they are honest: the latter they take shame in, whereas they preen themselves on the former. The cause of all of these things was the pursuit of political power, motivated by greed and ambition."

I am preparing some lectures on the Peloponnesian War. Come to think of it, Thucydides could do double-duty for a rousing 50 minutes on our current leader, don't you think?

Sincerely,
Bruce Brasington
Canyon, Tex.

Dear Professor Brasington: Yeap, Thucydides was a real winner. Many thanks.

Cordially,

—WFB

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 ■

Bush-Bennett 2000

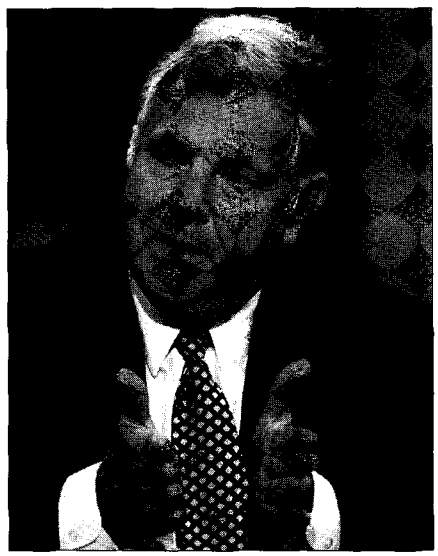
That's the ticket

ROBERT D. NOVAK

On Super Tuesday, when George W. Bush clinched the nomination, some of us on television speculated about his running mate. The ideal complement to the Texas governor, I suggested, would be a cerebral, articulate Catholic with a little silver in his hair. Who else but Bill Bennett? Now, Bennett doesn't like the idea. Bush has shown no sign that he is moving that way. And so it will likely not happen. But that wouldn't be the first time the GOP took the wrong path. As Speaker Thomas Brackett Reed said in 1896, when asked whether the party might nominate him for president, "They could do worse, and they undoubtedly will."

It was four years ago this summer, on the eve of the San Diego convention, that Bob Dole asked William J. Bennett to be his running mate. Bennett declined, and Dole instead chose Jack Kemp. It is not certain that Bennett would have helped Dole's pitiable effort, but the idea made a lot of sense then, and makes even more now. Bush, like Dole, could use someone on the ticket with a better feel for social-conservative issues. And at age 53, Bush still has something of the frat boy about him, and does not pretend to be an intellectual. What's more, during his fierce struggle with Sen. John McCain, Bush exhibited the typical Republican clumsiness in dealing with Catholic voters, an indispensable constituency for the party.

Bennett is, indeed, the perfect complement to Bush: a brainy, street-smart Catholic who has never been accused of immaturity. He is a favorite of rank-and-file conservatives, including the religious Right, and he does not frighten the party's establishment. In addition, this best-selling author of virtue books can



Newsmakers/Richard Ellis

William Bennett

reassure Americans seeking an anchor in their lives.

Admittedly, Bennett would be a choice off the beaten path: He has never sought public office and represents no state. But unlike the more conventional prospects for vice president, he transcends workaday politics as the kind of figure who can capture the imagination of Americans. More effectively than any of the presidential aspirants, he has called for renewing the institutions of family, faith, and community. He does not flinch from straight talk about the nation's maladies: juvenile crime, suicide, divorce, drug abuse—and abortion. At the 1992 Republican convention, he brought the crowd to its feet when he declared that America's children are not "animals in heat" but "thinking creations of God." This would be a vice-presidential nominee who could not be ignored.

When Bennett rejected Dole's vice-presidential offer, he was true to the pattern of his extraordinary career as a Republican. That career began 14 years ago when, at age 41, while serving as President Reagan's education secretary, he switched his registration from Democratic to Republican. Julius Caesar refused the crown three times, but Bennett has since turned down even more opportunities, ranging from party chairman to presidential candidate. That prompts two tantalizing questions. Why has he said no so many times? And why do the offers keep coming?

Bennett's muscular personality and aggressive intellectuality have made him a natural for GOP headhunters. He should be all the more appealing now because of the mess the party has made with the Catholic vote. To be elected, Bush must appeal to these voters. There is a ready supply of Catholic governors who might team with Bush: George Pataki of New York, Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, John Engler of Michigan, Tommy Thompson of Wisconsin, Frank Keating of Oklahoma. These are politicians who happen to be Catholic. But Bennett, in contrast, is a Catholic who, if not quite a politician, has been engaged in political activities for many years.

This distinction is critically important. For all of his being educated at Williams and Harvard, and devoting his early career to academic pursuits, and living today as a multimillionaire author and lecturer, Bennett still evokes an aura of the gritty, savvy urban Catholic who is ideologically attracted to Republicans but culturally put off by them. "I'm from Brooklyn, Roman Catholic, always thought of the Democrats as the party of the people and the Republicans as the country-clubbers," he told me in 1986, in explaining why it had taken him so long to become a Republican. "To leave the Democrats was like leaving the Catholic Church."

From the moment he signed up with the party, Bennett was recruited vigorously—and unsuccessfully—for a more active role. Registered to vote in his wife's hometown of Charlotte, N.C., he was urged by Sen. Jesse Helms to run for that state's other Senate seat. When he changed his registration to his own home in Maryland, members of that state's desiccated Republican party pleaded with him to run for the Senate from there. In between, he had been sought out for a Senate run from his native state of New York. As early as 1988, a "Draft Bennett" presidential movement was formed, and friends tried well in advance to launch a

Mr. Novak, columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, is the author most recently of *Completing the Revolution: A Vision for Victory in 2000*.

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1996 campaign. During the Bush administration, Bennett actually agreed to serve as Republican national chairman, then reneged when his brother Robert (later to be Bill Clinton's lawyer) pointed to vast conflict-of-interest problems with his profession as an author. The V.P. offer from Dole was the most recent that Bennett has spurned.

So, why has he always said no? When he decided in 1995 to forego a presidential bid, I asked him whether he feared skeletons in his closet. He said no, while allowing that he had lived a full life. The real problem, he continued, was that he would rather spend a Saturday afternoon playing football with his young sons than shaking the hands of voters.

When I asked him specifically this March 13 what he would do if George W. Bush asked him to run, this most voluble and articulate of men was silent for a moment, then said hesitantly: "I don't know. I don't know." His cell phone went dead, and when he called me back a half-hour later, he had collected his thoughts. "Of course," he said, "I'd seriously consider it—like I did the last time [when Dole asked]. But I think it would come out the same way. I don't think I'd do it." Bennett told me, as he had on previous occasions, that he lacks the "passion" to seek political office, and questioned whether he met Bush's requirements. "I don't think he needs a philosopher," he said.

There is, of course, no assurance that Bennett will ever have to provide an answer—especially given his performance so far in the 2000 presidential cycle. He was initially impressed by Bush, then flirted, and traveled, with McCain, then drew back when McCain made his February 28 speech assailing Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. Bennett's reaction to McCain's blast reassured the Bush camp as to Bennett's objectivity, but one of Bush's advisers raised with me a cautionary note: If presidential nominee Bush said something considered offensive by vice-presidential nominee Bennett, would his running mate go public against him? In short, is Bennett a team player?

Maybe not. But, for Bush and the Republican party, the risk is worth taking. This figures to be a close election. The old formula of picking a vice president who simply won't hurt may be insufficient. Bill Bennett, as the quintessential Catholic candidate, could help. NR

■ CAMPAIGN 2000 II ■

Testing, Testing

The need for litmus tests

RAMESH PONNURU

GEORGE W. BUSH got through the Republican primaries without signing any pledges to use a pro-life "litmus test" to pick his running mate or judicial nominees. Good. Now it's time for him to start applying a pro-life litmus test.

The reason pro-lifers are concerned about the makeup of the federal judiciary is obvious. Pro-lifers want the Republican vice-presidential nominee to be one of them for two reasons. First, that person could very well end up being president. Second, the selection of a nominee who favors keeping abortion legal would be a major symbolic defeat—and in politics, symbolism is never "mere."

The political symbolism of pro-life pledges, however, is terrible. If the candidate accepts a litmus test, he is seen as buckling under pressure, which diminishes his appeal to the electorate. An explicit litmus test for vice presidents also diminishes a presidential candidate's ability to garner endorsements from Republican politicians who favor abortion rights and imagine themselves as possible veeps.

And any pro-life litmus test makes both the candidate and social conservatives look intolerant. Most people do not think that otherwise well-qualified people should be excluded from an office "just because they're pro-choice." But it is impossible for views on abortion to be incidental to the selection of a running mate: If a pro-choicer were picked, it would almost certainly be because he was pro-choice. Yet the public's sentiment must nevertheless be dealt with.

The way to deal with it is to have a pro-life litmus test without announcing it. Bush, in other words, should refuse to say in public that he will definitely pick a pro-lifer, but then pick someone who just happens to be one. After all, most Republican politicians are pro-life; the odds are that an unbiased selection would yield a pro-lifer. The role of social conservatives, meanwhile, is not to issue demands but to organize so that the selection of a pro-choicer is unthinkable.

This is how pro-lifers have succeeded in practice. Their pledge drives didn't work in either 1996 or 2000; the Republican nominees won't take the pledges. The ticket stays pro-life because there is an *informal* litmus test: The balance of forces in the Republican party does not permit a pro-choicer on the ticket. The delegates to the Republican convention are heavily pro-life. They would not necessarily reject a pro-choice vice-presidential nominee. But there would certainly be a nasty fight on the floor before they accepted one, even a superstar like Colin Powell. George W. Bush won't want that, any more than Bob Dole did.

■

The way to deal with public sentiment is to have a pro-life litmus test without announcing it.

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Even conservatives who are themselves pro-choice should be grateful that pro-lifers wield this veto. Abortion is the only possible basis for organizing a challenge to a vice-presidential nominee; and it is also a useful index of a candidate's political philosophy generally. Republican politicians who favor abortion rights are far more likely than their pro-life peers also to favor racial preferences, lavish social spending, gun controls, and regulation. Partly this is because politicians who have the intestinal fortitude to withstand the cultural pressure on abortion will be able to stand firm on less difficult issues as well.

Pro-choice Republicans should be grateful, too, because the pro-life veto—contrary to conventional wisdom—*helps* the Republican presiden-

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tial candidate in the fall. It may be true that more voters describe themselves as "pro-choice" than as "pro-life" (although those terms mean different things to different people, and, in any case, the margin has been shrinking). But among people who actually vote on abortion, pro-lifers vastly outnumber pro-choicers.

Hard-core pro-choicers, of course, would not vote for Bush even if he made Hillary Clinton his veep. The political rationale for a pro-choice veep would be to attract a narrowly defined set of voters—those who are worried enough that Bush will end abortion that the issue would sway their vote, but whose worries can be alleviated by a veep pick.

■

The litmus test for judges should not be their view of abortion but rather their view of *Roe* v. *Wade*.

■

Against this tiny group must be set a few million pro-lifers who would desert the Republicans in such a case. At this point comes the inevitable question: Where would they go? They may be able to go to Pat Buchanan. What is more important is that in America, discouraged voters don't have to go anywhere; they can stay home. The pundits are arguing that Bush has so solidified his support on the right that he has the freedom to name a pro-choice running mate. But pro-lifers rallied so strongly behind Bush in the first place because John McCain was considered unsound on abortion—even though McCain had a solid pro-life voting record. Many pro-lifers—maybe not a majority, but certainly a large fraction—would be even quicker to turn away from a ticket with an explicit supporter of abortion rights on it.

Political considerations militate particularly strongly against the selection of a pro-choice Catholic such as Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge or New York governor George Pataki. The Catholic bishops would object strenuously in either case. After the controversies over the House chaplain and Bush's visit to Bob Jones University, it would look as though Republicans were saying that for them, the only good Catholic is a bad Catholic. As *Crisis* magazine's Catholic-voter project has recently documented, "active" (i.e., church-going) Catholics are a key swing vote. They are mostly pro-life, but even the pro-choicers among them might be subtly influenced by an implicit slap at Rome. If Bush really wants a pro-choicer, let him pick a Protestant. But better to pick a pro-lifer instead.

A litmus test for the federal judiciary presents its own complications. To start with, the test has to be refined. Gary Bauer and Steve Forbes insisted during the primary that Bush pledge to nominate "pro-life judges." Strictly speaking, this demand is unreasonable. Some pro-lifers argue that it would be licit for a Supreme Court, moved by pro-life understandings, to interpret the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection to all "persons" as including the unborn. But to outlaw abortion from the bench in that manner is hardly a practical goal. The litmus test for judges, then, should not be their view of abortion but rather their view of *Roe* v. *Wade*. Many legal scholars who are themselves pro-choice reject *Roe*; and that conviction ought to be good enough, if nominees can be counted on to have the courage of it.

Roe, in fact, is an even better index of a judge's legal philosophy than abortion is of a politician's political philosophy. The ruling is the very symbol of judicial lawlessness, so constitutionally *outré* that it is hard to reconcile with any principled limits on judicial power. A judge willing to uphold such an indefensible decision is willing to ignore the Constitution for political convenience—and will be willing to do so on many subjects other than abortion.

The Clinton administration has a publicly announced litmus test for judges: They have to support *Roe* (and presumably, by extension, its progeny). Gore has spoken out of both sides of his mouth on the question of whether he would maintain this standard. The trouble with this pro-*Roe* litmus test is not that it is a litmus test but that it is pro-*Roe*, and thus anti-constitutional.

A litmus test based on opposition to *Roe*, on the other hand, presents no difficulties *in principle*. Nominees who passed it would still have to show that they have a judicial temperament—that they are willing to listen to arguments, that they will not be swayed by improper considerations, that they will recuse themselves from cases in which they have a conflict of interest. But there is no rule barring nominees from declaring their views on a judicial doctrine like *Roe*. (If this were the rule, there would be a lot fewer law-review articles.) Presidents and senators have to be able to ask nominees to the Supreme Court whether their view of the Court's power is sufficiently expansive to include setting abortion policy. If they cannot ask, or cannot act on the response (or non-response) to the question, a constitutional check on the courts' power is removed.

The immense practical obstacle to requiring judicial nominees to oppose *Roe* is the erosion of this check in the political culture. The Senate would have to be informed if the president had received an assurance from the nominee on *Roe*. If he had, mistaken but widespread views of the propriety of such assurances would probably make the nominee unconfirmable. Add to this problem the political headaches associated with litmus-test pledges generally—the imputation of weakness to the pledger and intolerance to the pledgee—and it becomes untenable to ask a presidential candidate to commit to appointing anti-*Roe* judges.

The next-best approach is the one Bush has taken: to pledge to appoint legal conservatives to the bench. Because *Roe* is an index of legal conservatism, a judge who has been thoroughly vetted for constitutional philosophy—and bitter experience has taught conservatives a thing or two about how to do that—will be against it.

Over the longer term, though, the next-best approach isn't good enough. Conservatives—senators and scholars alike—have to work to relegitimize the idea that the elected branches of government have some say about constitutional questions. At that point, we could have a "litmus test" that dares to speak its name. **NR**

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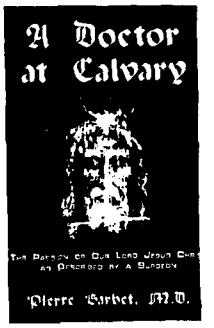

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 III ■

Our Inglorious Revolution

Who will defend America?

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

REVOLUTIONS can take place relatively unnoticed. The reason has often been given: that the most profound revolutions are not those that overturn institutions, but those that leave institutions standing while emptying them of all significance. Of course, institutions are too useful to remain empty; revolutionaries eventually fill them with a significance that suits their purposes. The Glorious Revolution of 1688, for example, kept the monarchy, but transformed the state into a "crowned republic." Everything looked the same; but everything was different.

Are Americans living through a similarly invisible transformation? A striking feature of the current campaign is that not a single major candidate stands for the concept of America that was universally celebrated until about 20 years ago: America as an ethnic melting pot, in which is forged a new, unhyphenated American nation united by a common culture. Politicians of all parties, and countless Hollywood movies, saluted this unifying vision.

Yet, almost overnight, the melting-pot ideal vanished—replaced by a bastard ideal called "diversity." Although there are superficial similarities between these two concepts, what distinguishes them profoundly is that, under diversity, different ethnic groups fail to melt into one another to produce an American ethnicity. Each group retains its own culture; their common American identity is a diluted legal one, which does not have the first claim on their loyalty.

Diversity has successfully presented itself as a more tolerant ideal than the melting pot. Politicians and cultural leaders have swallowed the comforting notion that it allows people to preserve their identities instead of forcing them into the "brutal bargain" of assimilation. But this ideology has toxic consequences: It encourages the belief that culture is genetically transmitted and racially specific, that true insights into the thoughts and feelings of another race or sex are impossible, and that political representation must therefore be based upon ethnic and gender proportionalism rather than majority rule. In their combination of racial essentialism and postmodern sentimentality, such views are a sort of soft fascism.

Yet these views have thoroughly replaced melting-pot Americanism in political rhetoric. Al Gore's famous mistranslation of *e pluribus unum* as "from one, many" is actually a perfect description of what Gore thinks America is: a permanent bazaar of self-conscious minorities. Both Gore and Bill Bradley made blatant appeals to ethnic divisiveness, pandering to the race-baiter Al Sharpton, accusing each other (absurdly) of hostility to minorities, and defending—without qualification—race and gender preferences.

The two leading Republicans were better, but not good. Both George W. Bush and John McCain equivocate on racial preferences, and support bilingual education (except for some brief criticisms by McCain). Strong rhetorical support for the melting pot—or the related idea of "color blindness"—was confined to fringe candidates.

How has the idea of a common American identity been banished to the fringes of politics? How have absurd racist theories of culture—admittedly softened, sentimentalized, and made respectable by ethnic association—become the common coin of public debate? In the middle of this revolution, as we are, we can only glimpse the reasons as through a veil. But let me suggest the following:

1) *Official policy.* The government has created significant financial and other incentives to adopt an official identity such as the "Hispanic" one. It facilitates admission to college, job hiring, and promotions. When such privileges have existed for several years, they come to be seen as entitlements. The identity on which they depend comes to seem natural. And the group shaped by that identity develops a common interest in defending its "rights." Hence the rise of diversity.

2) *Race.* The common American culture has been relativized as "white" culture. That is nonsense, of course, since a thousand ethnic influences have helped reshape the original culture of the English settlers. But the lie serves to delegitimize assimilation, by characterizing it as the imposition of an alien culture on all non-Anglo Americans; this, in turn, justifies the establishment of minority cultural enclaves. And once America is relativized as a "white" construct, it can hardly be defended, let alone celebrated, by whites with a guilty conscience about race. Hence the weakness of the opposition to diversity.

3) *Immigration.* Persistently high levels of immigration make diversity and multiculturalism plausible, because they introduce into society even more people who bear different cultural traditions. This fosters cultural enclaves like those in Miami; the more Spanish-speakers arrive, the easier it is for everyone to avoid assimilation. They strengthen existing ethnic political organizations and even, sometimes, awaken ethnic loyalties in long assimilated individuals and groups—a phenomenon Scott McConnell has called "de-assimilation." In these circumstances, many immigrants want to assimilate but are discouraged from doing so. Hence the persistence of diversity.

4) *President Clinton.* He is the first president actually to embrace the notion of diversity in conscious opposition to that of the melting pot. He has stated that America has embarked on the unprecedented experiment of living without either a majority race or a majority culture. It is actually not unprecedented: The Habsburg Empire, RIP, tried the same. What made America more successful—until now—was that it had diluted ethnic passions by mixing them with the sympathies generated by a common culture.

But Clinton has done more than merely predict the development of a nation without a common culture. Through his ruthless exploitation of ethnic divisions in everything from the "Chinese espionage" case to the burning of black churches, he has demonstrated that diversity maximizes the tensions in a multiethnic society.

It would be nice to imagine the Republicans taking up the cause of the melting pot; but that would require their thinking seriously about race, culture, and the American identity. **NR**

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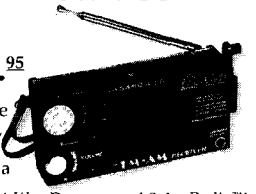

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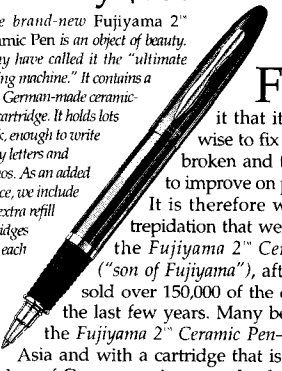

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 IV ■

Fear Not Gore

He's hardly invincible

KATE O'BEIRNE

'NOTHING is the matter with Mr. Gore, except that he can't be elected president," Sen. Pat Moynihan flatly declared when he endorsed Bill Bradley last fall. Although the blunt assessment that Gore was a sure loser was widely shared just a few months ago, Washington oddsmakers now insist the vice president is the heavy favorite in November. The good news for George W. Bush is that the handicappers are wrong, and the sage of the Senate was half right. Pretty much everything is the matter with Al Gore as a candidate, and he faces formidable historic trends as he begins the general-election campaign.

Moynihan correctly noted that it is "rare and unusual" for a sitting vice president to be elected to the presidency; he pointed out that the only ones who succeeded were Martin Van Buren and Bush the elder (who, according to Moynihan, "really got Ronald Reagan's third term").

Gore faces the same problem Bush's father did, and trails W. in polls on the attribute of being a "strong leader." Also, Gore scores below his own boss's job-approval ratings by double digits. Together, these factors make it unlikely that he will win Clinton's third term.

The California primary results provide evidence that voters do, in fact, have a case of the Clinton fatigue that the media pretend has been cured. The 60 percent of California primary voters who disapprove of Clinton as a person voted overwhelmingly against Gore.

Past elections, too, indicate that Gore has a tough road ahead: Over the past 30 years, Democratic presidential candidates have performed dismally. Hubert Humphrey's 43 percent showing in 1968 has been about average for Democratic nominees, with only Jimmy Carter (in 1976) hitting 50 percent. In 1992, the Clinton-Gore ticket took only 43 percent of the vote, winning a majority only in Arkansas (and just 47 percent in Gore's home state of Tennessee).

In Clinton's pluralities, *The New Republic*'s John Judis mistakenly sees the Democratic base of the '90s that Al Gore need only build on to coast to the White House. Judis's superficial statistical analysis complements the airy conventional wisdom that has given Republicans a case of the jitters about Gov. Bush's prospects.

But the GOP's own veteran demographer, John Morgan, counsels these nervous Republicans to ignore the scribes—from whom he expects eight long months of misleading cheerleading for Gore. He asserts that it's "liberals who should be panicked," because the notion of a Democratic lock on the electoral college is just "a nice myth." It ignores the fact that Republicans narrowly lost many states in 1992 only because of Ross Perot's candidacy.

As far as 1996 is concerned, Morgan attributes Dole's loss to his weakness as a candidate, the Democrats' early ad war against him, and the largest drop in voter turnout in history. In 1996, 9 million fewer people voted than four years earlier—as a result of the media's months-long trumpeting of a supposedly insurmountable double-digit Clinton lead. Even with this media support, Clinton garnered only 49 percent; in other words, a supposedly popular president couldn't even win the popular vote.

Looking at the electoral-college map, Morgan can't imagine how Gore can top Dukakis's 46 percent performance. A Republican candidate, he explains, begins the race with 200 electoral votes, from the states that mostly went Republican in the last two elections. This GOP base includes most of the South, the GOP Midwest, and western states like Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming. Bush currently leads Gore in five of the six states (Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri) that, combined, would give him more than the additional electoral votes he needs to reach 270—the magic number.

Only a third-party candidate drawing over 10 percent of the vote would jeopardize the huge base that makes Bush the favored candidate.

Even though the media won't be helping his cause—he's not, after all, John McCain—Bush still has to be favored in a comparison of the candidates' most important attributes. The same analysts who maintained all last year that the single most important quality voters wanted in a candidate was "authenticity" are now claiming, implausibly, that the odds favor the android in the race. The inestimable George F. Will says that voters pick a president based on who they want in their living rooms for the next four years; by this standard, a nice guy like George W. Bush shouldn't finish last to a vicious phony like Al Gore.

John McCain, who pledged to cheering crowds that he would "beat Al Gore like a drum," appealed to voters who wanted "someone who fights for what he believes in" and would restore honesty and integrity to the White House. Republicans will attack Gore's reversals on issues like abortion, gun control, and tobacco, not as evidence that he's a closet conservative (as Bill Bradley absurdly claimed), but as examples that he will do or say anything to get elected. Gore began a recent RNC survey with a 44 percent unfavorable rating, which shot up to 62 percent when respondents were reminded of his flip-flops on issues, his dishonest representations of his record, and the Buddhist temple fundraiser.

Finally, did I mention that Al Gore lies? Unlike Bill Clinton, Gore doesn't lie when he's in trouble—he lies when his lips are moving. Take, for example, his recent declaration that campaign-fiance reform will be a central theme of his campaign. On that issue, he's a reformer with a record—and the record's not good.

Furthermore, Gore's a *bad* liar. As a sociopath, Clinton believes the lie he's telling, while Gore, who seems conscious of his deception, stiffens up (even more) and gives the game away.

John Morgan's 30 years of experience as an elections demographer tell him that "Republicans should win this thing, and govern [all three branches] for the first time since the '20s." The Democrats and their friends in the media fear Morgan is right, but hope that their claim of a Gore Juggernaut will discourage the GOP. They said Clinton was unbeatable in 1996, which was false. They are saying Gore is unbeatable now, which is surely false. Shame on the Democrats for fooling Republican voters once in 1996, but shame on the GOP if they're fooled twice. NR

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■ THE DEMOCRATS ■

Son of Mario

A Democratic prince on the move

JAY NORDLINGER

WASHINGTON whispers, as we all know, and lately it has been whispering about—Andrew Cuomo. He is, of course, son of, and also secretary of housing and urban development. HUD is not exactly a glamour spot, but Cuomo has made the most of it, politically. He is very close to Al Gore, and one whisper has it that he could become the vice president's running mate. If not that, chief of staff, in a Gore administration. If not that, governor of New York, after the 2002 election. Smart, determined, and politically shrewd, Cuomo has as bright a future as any Democrat of his generation. That name doesn't hurt, either. Actually, he has two names that don't hurt, being married to a Kennedy (one of Robert's). Democrats can be excused for salivating over this prince.

Would Gore actually name him to the ticket? Probably not. He has his strengths: He's an "ethnic," and Catholic. And he has eloquence, presence, a New Democratic credential or two, an attractive family (including twin daughters), and those royal names. But he has never held elective office, is barely into his forties, has a scandal-smudged past, and comes from a state that should be in the Democratic column anyway. Gore's better bet might be another cabinet member, energy secretary Bill Richardson, who, though gas prices are up, still has a Mexican mother. Lovely, in today's politics.

Chief of staff, however, makes perfect sense, and governor of New York, even more. Cuomo obviously wants it, it is well within his grasp, and his father is bursting for him to have it. He would have to do something about the state's Democratic comptroller, Carl McCall, who has already begun to campaign. But that should be no problem. Andrew and his backers could easily induce McCall to step aside, avoiding the unpleasantness of a primary.

Ask around about Cuomo, and you get strikingly common responses: bright, ambitious, proud, impressive, thin-skinned, aggressive, hard-hitting, thuggish, brutal. Seldom will a reporter do a story and find so much fear surrounding his subject. People—even his fans—are reluctant to talk about him, conscious of his power and wrath. "He can get you," is something you often hear. "Vindictive son-of-a-bitch," is a typical description. One Cuomo-watcher notes that Andrew "practices an old-style politics, ward-boss politics," the politics of a bruiser. Cuomo is notorious among reporters for going to unusual lengths to control any coverage of his activities. Yet he has the world's most charming and affable press secretary—go figure. Every operation needs a good cop, apparently.

Then there is that temper—the Cuomo temper, one of the most fabled in Washington. Most insiders have a store of Cuomo-temper stories, some of them truly hair-curling. "Woe unto you if you get on Andrew's bad side," says one who has worked with him, and admires him. When it comes to temper, "he makes John McCain look like Winnie the Pooh." Cuomo will erupt volcanically among his inner circle, while these fits are "shielded from the outside world." The Cuomo associate goes on to say, however, that Andrew has a noble Democratic heart: "He has a Rooseveltian, a Kennedyesque sense of public service, and that, combined with his sharp political elbows, ain't bad."

Andrew Cuomo by Ken Westphal

Cuomo was born in 1957, and learned politics at his father's knee. In 1982, just after graduating from law school, he ran his father's first campaign for governor. They won. For two years, Andrew served as his father's top adviser, drawing a dollar a year. Later, he became a partner in a Manhattan law firm, filled with shady characters who would soon cause him grief. Cuomo, along with some others, invested in a Florida savings and loan called Oceanmark. Messy and intricate lawsuits ensued. Luckily for Cuomo, they are as difficult to understand—and mind-numbing in their details—as Whitewater. Still, Cuomo is supersensitive on the subject. When *The American Spectator* was preparing an article on Oceanmark, Cuomo had his men send the magazine a comically threatening letter.

In 1986, Cuomo performed the signature act of his career, founding HELP, which stands for Housing Enterprise for the Less Privileged. This organization—it is now run by one of his siblings—is dedicated to building "transitional housing" and to the idea of a "continuum of care," whereby the down-and-out are guided to self-sufficiency, step by step. HELP is what President Bush twinklingly referred to as a "point of light." Cuomo has derided this language, but it applies.

Even while engaged in this project, however, Cuomo was never far from politics. He had a (famous) direct line into the governor's office. And he was not averse to throwing his weight around, dropping ominous hints—"You can be replaced, you know"—when state officials and others refused to do his bidding. Even many who share his politics and his passion for social activism recoil in disgust at the mention of his name, regarding him as a bully-boy.

Cuomo came to national attention in 1991, when Mayor David Dinkins tabbed him to head the city's commission on the homeless. The report he produced—"The Way Home: A New Direction in Social Policy"—was something of a shocker. It confirmed the neoconservative critique of the homelessness problem. "For too long," Cuomo conceded, "we did not want to admit the truth, because to admit the truth could be seen as criticism of [the homeless themselves]." The problem, Cuomo admitted, was not one of poverty, of lack of housing.

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Rather, it had "many roots," including "troubled family histories, drug or alcohol problems, and premature deinstitutionalization from mental hospitals." He even charged that "the very term 'homeless' is a misnomer." He sneered at "crusaders" and quipped that "an apartment doesn't cure a crack addiction"—a remark worthy of Irving Kristol himself. Cuomo called for "a new war on poverty," to be waged by a private-public partnership. The free market would supply the expertise; the government, the dough.

The young man was careful, of course—they all are—to cover his semi-apostasy with traditional liberal rhetoric. *His* concept, he protested, was "poles apart from the Republican notion of 'voluntarism.'" But Cuomo had broken a dam on a difficult, heavily mythologized issue. During this period of his life, he sounded much like his sister-in-law, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, lieutenant governor of Maryland, and another name that Washington whispers—she is a possible, though a long-shot, Gore veep. Most likely, she will be elected governor of her own state in 2002. "KKT," as she is known, is a master at combining small heresies with doses of Democratic poetry.

■

The young Cuomo has many of the formidable gifts of his father. But he is even more the political animal.

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When Bill Clinton won the White House in 1992, Cuomo went to Washington to become assistant HUD secretary under Henry Cisneros. When Cisneros left at the end of Clinton's first term—still under a cloud of "sex lies" to the FBI—the president elevated Cuomo to the top spot, in part at Gore's urging. Cuomo quickly promised a new, "reinvented" HUD, nothing like the pit of its past. But he has mainly fashioned the institutional equivalent of himself: an agency that rewards friends and punishes enemies, real or perceived. He has repeatedly tried to use the department as a patronage machine, often being blocked by Republicans on Capitol Hill, with whom his relations have been rocky. They ask; he stonewalls.

The most astonishing and abhorrent aspect of Cuomo's HUD tenure concerns the agency's inspector general, Susan Gaffney, against whom Cuomo has conducted what can only be called a dirty war. This war has been extensively detailed, though chiefly in the conservative press. The long and the short of it is: Gaffney, fulfilling her responsibility as inspector general, objected to certain of the department's practices, and Cuomo did everything in his power to discredit and destroy her, spending hundreds of thousands of federal dollars in the process. Congressional Republicans ordered an investigation, which produced a damning report.

Yet Cuomo cannot fail to delight his fellow Democrats, especially those who are most partisan. Many wanted him to run for Pat Moynihan's Senate seat this year, but then Mrs. Clinton wanted in, and Andrew had to cool his heels. He has hardly been absent from the campaign, though. In December, he seized some $60 million in housing funds from Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Hillary's opponent in the Senate race. This was about as naked a political move as could be made. Republicans squawked, while Democrats merely grinned, shaking their heads at their boy's audacity. Hill Republicans are investigating that one, too.

The young Cuomo has many of the formidable gifts of his father. But he is even more the political animal. He can cut up Republicans with the best of them, as he has proven in his campaign forays for Gore and Mrs. Clinton. This is a slasher in the Gore/Tony Coelho style. Yet he can lay on the goop, too. He speaks unblushingly about "economic justice" and refers to "progressive politics" as "the Judeo-Christian tradition." His wife, Kerry Kennedy Cuomo, has said about him, "He has a serious commitment to helping the most vulnerable, the poorest people in our society . . . He's their advocate. He speaks for the people in urban America, the people on Indian reservations, the people who have no other voice." And who does that sound like? Right—Mrs. Cuomo's father. And no comparison would flatter Andrew more. In fact, he courts it. Like RFK, he is both ruthless in his politics and on fire with the belief that Democratic policies are just and godly, while Republican ones are . . . not. In his party, how can he miss? Watch out. **NR**

■ **PUBLIC POLICY** ■

Votes for Felons

A new Democratic constituency

JOHN J. MILLER

GOV. PAUL CELLUCCI discovered a couple of years ago that a group of Massachusetts prison inmates were organizing a political-action committee. Cellucci moved immediately to quash the group. He issued an executive order and then went a step further, filing a state constitutional amendment to deny inmates the vote. Massachusetts is expected to join 47 other states soon in an outright ban on prisoner voting.

Liberals gnashed their teeth over Cellucci's move. It "sends the wrong message," said an ACLU lawyer to the *Boston Globe*, as if letting a bunch of felons lobby the legislature and mail checks to candidates sent a really positive message to society. A key leader of the Massachusetts Prisoners Association was a convicted murderer.

But if Massachusetts jailbirds lose some political freedom, those in other states may win a bit more—because of an embryonic nationwide campaign to liberalize the voting rights of people enmeshed in the criminal-justice system. Thirty-two states currently forbid people on probation or parole to vote, and, in 14 states, a felony conviction can mean disenfranchisement for life. As a result, about 4 million Americans—one in 50 adults—won't be eligible to vote in this year's fall elections. And since more than a third of them are black, voting rights for felons is emerging as one of the Left's hottest civil-rights issues. Republicans may have their neo-cons and paleo-cons; now Democrats are trying to organize a voting bloc of their own, the ex-cons.

In the last twelve months, at least nine states have considered the matter, and Congress held a hearing for the first time on a bill that would override state laws and grant voting privileges to felons on

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parole, probation, or in halfway houses.

This is a tempting strategy for Democrats on the lookout for new race-baiting opportunities. Human Rights Watch estimates that 13 percent of all black men can't vote today because of current or prior felony convictions, a rate that balloons to 20 percent in ten states. "In the next generation of black men, we can expect as many as 40 percent of them to lose the vote for some or all of their adult lives," says Marc Mauer of the Sentencing Project. During a Martin Luther King Day debate, Vice President Gore was asked what he intended to do about this. "I will review it," he promised gravely.

Voting-rights issues have always been racially charged, and southern blacks were systematically prevented from voting until the 1960s. That memory lingers, and Democrats try to take advantage of it today, even though black and white turnout rates are nearly identical. When Gore speaks to black audiences, for instance, he often mentions that his father supported the 1965 Voting Rights Act (true) and lost his Senate reelection bid because of it (false; his GOP opponent also supported the bill).

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Republicans have their neo-cons and paleo-cons. Democrats are trying to organize a voting bloc of their own, the ex-cons.

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Indeed, there's an urban myth among African Americans that they won't be able to vote starting in 2007, because that's the year a portion of the Voting Rights Act comes up for reauthorization in Congress. This fear is expressed so frequently on black radio stations and in black newspapers that the Department of Justice has posted disclaimers on its webpage rebutting it. But the concern won't go away, partly because Democrats won't let it. When Bill Bradley repeatedly said during the primary debates that he would press Congress to make the Voting Rights Act permanent, he was deliberately exploiting black paranoia.

Liberal civil-rights leaders have embraced the ex-con crusade; they will grasp at virtually any cause they can find to sustain their movement in an increasingly non-racist society. Their efforts diminish the achievements of their predecessors, who, of course, toiled to win poll access for law-abiding citizens. They also approach self-parody: "Felony voting restrictions are the last vestige of voting prohibitions in the United States. When the U.S. was founded, only wealthy white men were allowed to vote. Women, ethnic minorities, those who were illiterate, and the poor were excluded," said the NAACP's Hilary Shelton in House testimony last October. "Yet I have faith that the morally correct path, blazed by the inspiration of a more democratic union, shall ultimately prevail, and that this imperfection in our society too shall be corrected."

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Advocates of felon enfranchisement like to suggest that the U.S. is unusually oppressive when it comes to criminals and voting. France, Germany, and other industrial countries allow inmates to cast ballots. And the guilt-ridden Left, always in search of a racial angle, loves to point out that South Africa's highest court ruled last year that inmates could vote in national elections. They are somewhat less interested in acknowledging that Yitzhak Rabin's assassin has voted in Israel (a fact that Rabin's widow has called "an unprecedented scandal").

There's actually a good argument to be made in favor of voting rights for felons who have completed their sentences. "When you pay your debt to society, the government ought to get off your back," says Charles Sullivan of Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants. This logic makes special sense in the case of *nonviolent offenders*.

But even stronger arguments can be made against the idea. For one thing, denying the vote to felons is rooted in non-racist historical experience. Bans on it are as old as the Constitution. Unlike a literacy test in 1965 Mississippi, this form of disenfranchisement doesn't grow out of malign intentions. Furthermore, it's plausible that communities with a large share of ex-felons receive better representation when these people can't vote. Texas state representative Harold Dutton, a Democrat who plans to launch a voter-registration drive targeting former criminals in Dallas and Houston, makes this point, albeit unwittingly: "40,000 ex-felons with registration cards is more of a threat than 40,000 ex-felons with guns." In many jurisdictions, sheriffs and judges are elected.

If Democrats were truly committed to extending the franchise to people who have served out their sentences, rather than using the issue as an anti-GOP bludgeon, their bill in Congress, introduced by John Conyers of Michigan, could attract Republican co-sponsors. It has none. Getting a few ought to be easy; Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship Ministries, one of the most effective evangelical lobbying organizations on Capitol Hill, supports its content. "We agree with it, but we're concerned about the partisan way it's been handled," says Pat Nolan of the Justice Fellowship, the public-policy arm of Colson's outfit. "It looks like their objective is partisan advantage rather than changing the law."

Contrast this urgent crusade to give felons the vote with the broad support for an existing restriction on ex-cons. Convicted felons—even nonviolent offenders—are forever barred from possessing firearms. Under federal law, they face a mandatory five-year sentence if they're caught with one. That means accountants who've spent six months in the pokey can't go hunting. The National Rifle Association thinks that's okay. At the same time, liberals are stressing the moral necessity of letting murderers and rapists vote after their release from prison.

It's a topsy-turvy scenario, but an important case study of politics today. **NR**

■ LAW ■

Young and Deadly

The problem of juvenile crime

JOHN J. DiIULIO JR.

On Super Tuesday, 62 percent of California voters approved Proposition 21. This law authorizes prosecutors to bring felony charges against juveniles aged 14 or older, without having to get a judge's approval; makes vandalism resulting in $400 in damages prosecutable as a felony; permits courts to sentence even petty juvenile felons to adult prisons; and exposes youths convicted of murder to terms of life without parole.

Proposition 21 is direct democracy at its worst, and another recent initiative indicates why. In 1994, Californians passed a "three-strikes-and-you're-out" measure mandating that certain categories of adult repeat felons get 25-years-to-life. Other states applied similar laws in a modulated way, but in California the law became a perverse prosecutorial crutch. By 1997, it was being applied like buckshot in hundreds of cases, including many in which less Draconian penalties would have sufficed. Thus, only in California has the "three strikes" law produced anything like the dire fiscal consequences and jail-crowding crises predicted by many experts. I fear that Proposition 21 will result in similar prosecutorial overreaching.

Which is especially sad, because I believe that laws mandating adult incarceration for youth criminals are inherently unwise and pernicious. However predatory his crime, and however physically imposing a 14-year-old juvenile offender may be, there is neither a public-safety nor a correctional rationale for imprisoning him alongside hardened and sophisticated adult felons.

Locking up juvenile offenders with older felons under Spartan conditions will only produce better street gladiators. Yes, restrain violent youth criminals; but do so in suitably secure juveniles-only facilities, and, even then, be vigilant about the need to separate the minnows from the sharks and killer whales. Just because the juvenile-justice pendulum has swung too far in the direction of leniency, don't enact laws that tempt overburdened prosecutors to put the system on autopilot, set to the destination of adult prison.

To be fair, Proposition 21's opponents—mainstream criminologists, advocates for children, and their friends in government and the media—have only themselves to blame. For too long, they have denied the unpleasant post-1960 facts about juvenile crime. Unless they begin to make more credible arguments, and frankly admit that some of today's young criminals are predators who need to be confined (albeit humanely and not with adults), California's misguided crackdown on juveniles could sweep into other states.

Opponents should start by acknowledging that the juvenile-crime problem is grave. In 1967, President Johnson's crime commission noted with alarm that "enormous numbers of young people appear to be involved" in "juvenile delinquency and youth crime." In 1960, the juvenile-arrest rate was 20.1 per 1,000 youths aged 10–17. By 1970, it was 32.3, on the way to 46.4 in 1980, 51.5 in 1990, and 60.7 in 1995, or three times the rate

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that so alarmed the commission. Over the same period, violent-crime arrest rates for youth quadrupled.

Juveniles perpetrated 137,000 more violent crimes in 1994 than they did in 1985, and were responsible for 26 percent of the growth in violent crime during that period, including 48 percent of the increase in rapes and 35 percent of the increase in murders. In 1995, we had a record 1.7 million "delinquency" cases. In 1996, 2,172 juveniles were arrested for murder, up from 1,860 in 1980, but down from the 1993 peak of 3,790. Since 1996, juvenile violent-crime rates have been falling fast, but serious youth crime remains above its 1960 level.

Why, fumed the initiative's detractors, should we toughen the penalties for juvenile crime when it is declining? One answer is that tougher penalties might yield even lower rates. Important studies suggesting this do, in fact, exist. In 1997, University of Chicago economist Steven D. Levitt published a major statistical analysis in which he estimated that, had juvenile and adult incarceration risen at the same rates between 1978 and 1993, about a third of the violent and property crime committed by juveniles in those years would have been averted.

But, as I have long argued, the claim that today's super-impulsive youth criminals—including street-gang members—can be deterred by the stigma of arrest or the threat of confinement is highly doubtful. Where these typically fatherless, jobless, and semiliterate youths and young adults are concerned, one-on-one, adult-to-child prevention and intervention efforts—especially through grass-roots faith-based ministries—would do infinitely more to bolster public safety and save young lives than any conceivable enforcement strategy.

The California initiative's opponents also lambasted the "get tough" juvenile laws of other states—laws that (they claimed) had already landed large numbers of youths behind bars with adults. But if there aren't many juvenile offenders who commit acts that make them eligible for prosecution as adults, why worry? Are there really that many kids languishing in adult prisons?

The statistics tell a complicated story. The percentage of inmates under 18 entering state prison with sentences longer than one year was the same in 1997 as it had been in 1985: about 2 percent. But the total number of persons under 18 sentenced to adult state prisons in 1997, about 7,400, was more than twice the number sentenced in 1985; and the number of juveniles entering state prisons in 1997 for serious violent offenses was 4,510—higher than the total number for 1985.

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The claim that today's super-impulsive youth criminals can be deterred by the threat of confinement is highly doubtful.

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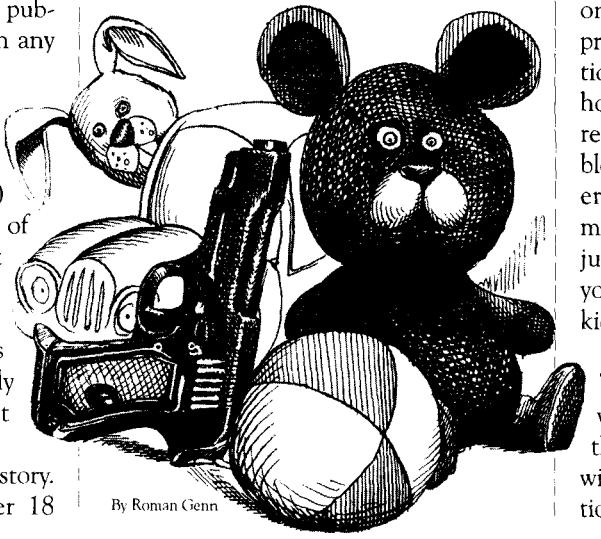
But we mustn't lose sight of the fact that the vast majority of all formally adjudicated juvenile offenders—leaving out, that is, the estimated 60 percent of serious youth criminals who were never caught, and the hundreds of thousands of petty young offenders who were given citations or other nonjudicial treatment—received sentences of low- or no-supervision probation. That is why we now have over half a million juvenile-probation cases annually. Only in this ironic sense can it truly be said that the system has been treating juveniles "as adults": Over half of the nation's 3.3 million adults on probation are felony offenders, most of whom are supervised little, if at all, and receive no real rehabilitative services.

The initiative's opponents also argued, foolishly, that post-1960 America had an epidemic of youth violence, but without having an epidemic of violent youth. Many, perhaps most, mainstream criminologists have contended that guns are the important factor: Until 1994, they say, guns were finding their way into young hands, producing more youth violence; after 1994, the juvenile gun supply suddenly slowed, and so did youth crime.

I myself am a longtime supporter of gun-control policies, including the Brady law. But I have yet to see a shred of evidence that the juvenile gun supply expanded and contracted as the no-bad-boys-only-bad-guns theory requires. In 1989, I warned about the criminogenic impact of crack cocaine, and the unprecedented youth violence that would result from drug wars among well-armed street gangs out to establish markets or defend turf. But, so far as I can tell, even the guns-plus-crack explanation does not begin to explain the complicated post-1985 data on rates of youth violence.

Whatever its causes, the problem threatens to get worse. By the year 2006, America will be home to the largest cohort of teenagers since 1980. Times are good, but several factors that research has consistently linked with crime and delinquency have abated little, if at all. For example, boys raised in mother-only homes are about twice as likely as otherwise comparable boys to commit crimes that lead to imprisonment. About 28 percent of all males, and 70 percent of black males, who will turn 16 in 2006 were born to unwed mothers.

To pathologies like these, measures like Proposition 21 are not the answer. The only sure-fire way to improve the life prospects of poor children from dysfunctional homes and dangerous neighborhoods is to put as many caring, responsible adults into their lives as possible—teachers, coaches, clergy, and others. We should all do what we can to monitor, mentor, or minister to first-time juvenile offenders, volunteer to assist youths on probation, and visit and help kids who are in criminal confinement in and around our own communities. That is what's needed for 2006, and what civic morality requires. Whether the citizens of California or other states will accept this challenge is an open question. **NR**



By Roman Genn

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■ ESSAY ■

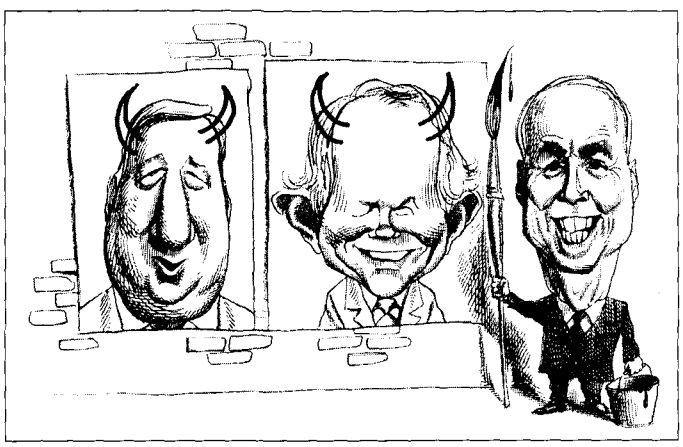
The Christian Right and Its Demonizers

A curious fear and loathing

NORMAN PODHORETZ

WHO'S afraid of the religious Right? Not I. And yet, as a "New York intellectual," I am precisely the type of person who is supposed to be trembling with apprehension at the baneful influence conservative Christians have gained within the Republican party and, through it, on the nation as a whole.

Of course, though to the manner born, I am not a typical New York intellectual. Most members of my breed are situated somewhere left of center, and I have long since migrated to a position on the other side of the political divide. Yet even the tiny handful of my former fellows who so much as barely tolerate my apostasy, at least in certain of its aspects, still taunt me with a classic piece of black humor: "Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?"



By Roman Genn

The "that" in the case of this "Mrs. Lincoln" refers to the alleged extremism and bigotry for which John McCain recently attacked Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. That speech may have destroyed McCain's chances of beating George W. Bush in the presidential primaries. And yet he was only saying out loud what is believed by vast numbers of the non-Republicans—independents and crossover Democrats—on whom he had been counting to carry him to the nomination.

Why then did the speech do him damage? The answer is that any gains he may have made with these voters could not compensate for the losses he sustained among others who, whether religious or not, are not strict secularists. In fact, even many Catholics seem to have resented McCain's assault on Robertson and Falwell, since they took it as an attack on the role of religion in general in our politics. On this point, the old sectarian animosities were trumped by a growing tendency among Catholics and Protestants to view seriousness about "traditional values" as more important than the specific theological etiology of that seriousness.

But not, I would be willing to bet, among Jews. Now, like many New York intellectuals (though not quite so many as is often imagined), I am Jewish. This makes my attitude doubly untypical. Indeed, a good guess would be that an even higher percentage of American Jews in general than of New York intellectuals (Jewish or not) are afraid of the Christian Right.

As Jews, my coreligionists are responding in part to inherited—and well-grounded—ancestral anxieties over the prevalence of anti-Semitism in conservative Christian circles. Never mind that, in the justly celebrated quip of Irving Kristol (a New York Jewish intellectual who preceded me in the political migration from left to right), Christians in America today are less interested in persecuting Jews than in marrying their sons and daughters. This undoubtedly poses a threat to what has come to be known as "Jewish continuity." But it is surely a benign one compared with the experience of the past, when Christian hostility toward Jews more often took forms ranging from discrimination to forced conversion, expulsion, and murder.

Never mind, too, that the charges of anti-Semitism which have been made against Pat Robertson are unsustainable. True, he has written a few off-the-wall things about an alleged conspiracy between Freemasons and Jewish bankers to take over the world in the 18th century. It is also true that he has sharply criticized "Jewish intellectuals and media activists" of today for playing a part in "the assault on Christianity."

Yet unlike the crackpot theory about the 18th century, his charge against the intellectuals and media activists of Jewish origin cannot so easily be dismissed. (It is important to recognize, however, that these particular persons tend to be the ones who have been described as "non-Jewish Jews.")

Furthermore, with regard to the concerns of present-day "Jewish Jews," Robertson has been a staunch friend. He has supported Israel through thick and thin; and when the Soviet Union still existed, he contributed large sums of

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money to help Jews emigrate. Would that all Christians were so anti-Semitic.

Irving Kristol has a brother-in-law, a scholar named Milton Himmelfarb, who is the author of an even more famous quip, for which he is much too rarely given credit: "American Jews live like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans." Himmelfarb's great witticism was born out of his analysis of Jewish political habits. In studying the statistics, he found that members of every other religio-ethnic group invariably shifted from the Democratic to the Republican ranks as they became more prosperous. Jews, by contrast, stubbornly remained as liberal as they had been when living in poverty even after they climbed up what Benjamin Disraeli—born Jewish but later to become a Christian and a conservative—called the "greasy pole" of success.

The explanation for this anomaly is very complex, but a major component is undoubtedly the conviction among Jews that the less influence Christians exert over American public life, the more secure the Jewish position will be. In liberalism, which has as one of its principal dogmas the most rigid possible separation of church and state, lies the best protection against efforts to "Christianize" the United States and thereby to turn them into "second-class citizens." Or so Jews have persuaded themselves.

Thus, let anyone call America a Christian country or, worse yet, express the hope that it should become one again as in days of yore, and all the atavistic fears of the Jewish community rise volcanically to the surface. Again, never mind that both Robertson and Falwell, not to mention countless other Christian leaders, have disavowed any such intention. Many (most?) American Jews are still convinced that the occasional maverick preacher or oddball politician who gives vent to the intention is affording us a peep at what lies deep in the heart of the entire community of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians.

But if most Jews are liberals, most liberals, obviously, are not Jews. And, making another bet, I would say that these Gentile liberals are secularists, even if they go to church once in a while or tell Dr. Gallup that they believe in God, while some indeterminate number are positively hostile to religion.

When these latter, whether self-proclaimed atheists or agnostics, think of religion, what comes into their minds is the very fanaticism and intolerance that Senator McCain sees in Robertson and Falwell. Not only that, but they also attribute these unlovely qualities to irrationality and superstition, and associate them with intellectual and cultural backwardness. So far as they are concerned, nothing has really changed since their great hero Clarence Darrow and the buffoon William Jennings Bryan crossed swords at the Scopes trial in the 1920s over the teaching of evolution in the schools.

In fact, many of them are not so secretly sure that the forces of benightedness, after a brief setback, have grown stronger since then. Only a few liberals are reckless enough to say this explicitly in print, though plenty of them came close in their denunciations of Kenneth Starr. But as I can testify from eavesdropping and/or being yelled at during numerous dinner parties, in private there is virtually no limit to the paranoia aroused by the Christian Right among liberals.

When Barry Goldwater ran for president in 1964, the all-but-open liberal fear was that he would bring fascism to the United States. Today, the old talk of fascism has been replaced by the conviction—the *sincere* conviction—that if the Christian Right ever got into power behind a Republican candidate, we would face an updated version of the Salem witch trials.

One might think that such liberals would have been reassured by the presidency of Ronald Reagan. After all, despite Reagan's expressed sympathy with the religious Right, its influence on American life and culture was no more discernible than it had been under Jimmy Carter (himself a born-again Christian). But no. Liberals remain unimpressed. They still expect that if a Republican like George W. Bush were elected with a debt to the Christian Right, all hell (as liberals envisage hell) would break loose. Sex outside marriage would practically be outlawed even among consenting heterosexual adults, let alone homosexuals; the sacred right to abortion would be taken away; artists writing about and depicting erotic acts would be censored; and children would be forced to intone the Lord's Prayer in school every morning instead of being taught how to use condoms properly.

In short, no one would be permitted to have any fun anymore.

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Liberals expect that if a Republican like George W. Bush were elected with a debt to the Christian Right, all hell (as liberals envision hell) would break loose.

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In this mindset, we can find a clue as to how Bill Clinton survived the campaign to impeach him. Liberals might well have felt betrayed by Clinton's policies on welfare, crime, and gays in the military, just as, conversely, conservatives had by Richard Nixon's embrace of wage and price controls and détente. Yet when Nixon faced impeachment, he was deserted in droves by conservatives, whereas liberals rallied around Clinton to a man—and, more bizarrely, given his egregious violations of feminist standards of conduct, to a woman. In my opinion, the reason not a one opposed him was mainly that they all looked upon Clinton as the only force standing between them and the Puritanical jackboots waiting menacingly in the wings.

Speaking first as a Jew, even if I shared to some degree in the paranoid interpretation of the Christian Right's agenda, I would still not be afraid of it. For quite apart from the sharp decline of anti-Semitism among Christians, there seems to me not the remotest chance that any Supreme Court—not even one composed of five Antonin Scalias and four Clarence Thomases—would read the First Amendment's prohibition of "an establishment of religion" as sanctioning this country to be declared officially Christian.

Moreover, the paranoid interpretation in this instance has no more basis in reality than paranoia does in any other situation. Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians were

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once content to render unto Caesar what was Caesar's and to concentrate on saving their own souls. What drew them into politics, first behind Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and then Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, was not any wish to impose their own views and mores on the rest of us. On the contrary: Far from being an aggressive move, it was a defensive one. They were trying to protect their own communities from the aggressions the liberal culture was committing against *them*, with the aid of the courts, the federal bureaucracies, and the ubiquitous media.

In this the Christian Right failed—so dismally that some of the people who persuaded them that political activism was the only way to defend themselves are now counseling an abandonment of that particular field and a retreat into the old insularity.

But now let me put on my intellectual's hat and explain why in that capacity I do not fear the Christian Right either. Take, to begin with, the cultural backwardness—in shorthand, the William Jennings Bryan anti-intellectual streak—that repels so many of my fellow intellectuals. Where an issue like the teaching of creationism is concerned, one does not need to be an uncritical Darwinist to think the intellectuals have a point—and the recent poll showing overwhelming support for including creationism in the curriculum makes that point stronger. But what the intellectuals ignore is that there has been a reversal of roles between the Bryan and Darrow traditions. Nowadays a far greater threat to scientific progress and cultural freedom comes from the secular Left than from the religious Right—as witness the promulgation of speech codes on the campus, and the attempts there to proscribe any deviation from the officially approved line on subjects as diverse as IQ, homosexuality, and affirmative action.

But it would be dishonest of me to suggest that my attitude toward the religious Right is merely characterized by an absence of fear. For I must confess that I think this movement has certain positive virtues.

For one thing, the conservative Christian communities have served as a reminder of the religious foundations on which this country was established and on whose capital its democratic system still draws. And for another, the religious Right has acted as an often lonely source of resistance to the complete triumph of relativism in our culture and libertinism in our behavior.

On this latter issue, I have long suspected that there is a parallel between the attitudes of many liberals today and the way the French took shelter under the American nuclear umbrella during the Cold War while simultaneously gratifying themselves with luxuriant outbursts of contempt against us. Such liberals, I think, are not quite so unhappy as they profess to be that there is a force in this country whose very existence helps set limits to libertine tendencies that they themselves worry about, especially when they have children, but that they do not know how to restrain and would lack the courage to fight even if they were in command of the necessary arguments. And so they rely on the "nuclear umbrella" of the Christian Right, while denouncing it all the more loudly as they quietly benefit from its protection. **NR**

The Limits of Compassion

What Bush should have learned

RICHARD LOWRY

In the media's telling, compassionate conservatism was cruelly abandoned by George W. Bush in his lurch to the right in South Carolina, trampled underfoot on the endless red carpet of the Bob Jones University stage. But it's really the other way around: W. didn't fail compassionate conservatism; it failed him. Not since all the early Gore slogans—"practical idealism," "new horizons"—has a campaign theme flopped so utterly. The primaries have made it clear that Bush may yet win the White House, but only by running on the ideas and themes he developed after compassionate conservatism fell flat.

New Hampshire was compassionate conservatism's Waterloo. The substance of compassionate conservatism—to the extent it has any—involves changing regulations and tax law to encourage charities and churches to care for the poor and the troubled. A fine, but picayune, idea. The real advantage of compassionate conservatism was always stylistic, and defensive: It would give Bush the same touchy-feely image as President Clinton. Early in the campaign, the media hailed this as a brilliant tactic, since they are so enamored of sensitivity in general, and of Clinton's caring in particular.

One problem: Republicans hated it. Both Bush and McCain reacted to Clinton's success, but in different ways. While Bush chose to feel our pain, McCain emphasized a tough plain-spokenness that seemed to challenge the feminization of contemporary American politics. In New Hampshire, this manly sensibility dovetailed perfectly with McCain's anti-Clinton rhetoric. W. peppered his speeches with references to "touching every willing heart" and "leaving no child behind," phrases that seemed deliberately evocative of Clinton. McCain talked of "raising a lot of hell" and famously pledged to "beat Gore like a drum."

Voters associated McCain's tough words with honesty, as well they should, since so much of today's sentimental cant in politics depends on evasions and half-truths. Bush routinely says that "single mothers" have the hardest job in America. Actually, many of them don't have jobs at all, but only Jesse Ventura and—on an exceptionally good day—his maverick cousin McCain might be insensitive enough to say it. Bush's compassion schtick also disarmed him in purely tactical terms in New Hampshire, as it dictated that he stay "positive."

So, in New Hampshire, compassionate conservatism had a road test. It made Bush seem Clintonesque, soft, and dishonest, while preventing him from hitting back against his opponent. Matched against McCain's patriotic reformism, Bush's compassion lost by 19 points.

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There are other, deeper problems with compassionate conservatism, besides the fact that it doesn't sell. Collective entities, such as government, can't be compassionate; they don't have *feelings*. Sentiment is a rotten guide to public policy, and conservative ideas perforce have sources besides compassion. This is why so many of W.'s examples of conservative compassion seem so inapt. Letting families keep more of their tax money may be wise, it may be good economics, it may be *just*, but it is not "compassionate."

When it comes to a contest of compassion, liberals will always have an advantage. The liberal conceit is that government can set a desirable goal and directly mandate its realization. Help the poor? Write a check. Conservatives have a more complicated vision of the importance of institutions, rules, and virtues, which can't be legislated by well-intentioned policymakers. When it comes to the poor, for instance, all government can do is protect the necessary conditions for wealth creation—by maintaining order, freeing the economy for entrepreneurship, and insisting that people fend for themselves. Compassion simply isn't relevant.

As John O'Sullivan and Ramesh Ponnuru have noted in these pages, conservatism is naturally associated with sterner virtues such as patriotism, self-reliance, and duty. Indeed, sentimentality has roots deeply entangled in our culture of self-indulgence and cruelty. It's no accident that President Clinton is famous for two kinds of lip biting. The exaltation of feeling necessarily breaks down self-restraint and hence increases running room for sheer willfulness, for an ethic of personal convenience. So it is that our culture celebrates compassion at the same time it destroys 1.2 million children in the womb every year. If this is the result of a compassionate society, please, let's have more hard-heartedness.

In fairness to Bush, he wasn't alone in paying rhetorical obeisance to compassion. The mascot of John McCain's campaign after New Hampshire was an almost perfect token of feminized America: the crying Boy Scout, once ever prepared, now reduced to a long night of tears by a negative phone call. McCain's relentless attacks on "negative" campaigning were of a piece with the compassionate culture's fear of saying anything critical about anyone, its distaste for argument, its unwillingness to judge. So, it made sense that McCain would stake his campaign on denouncing the leaders of the religious Right as "agents of intolerance": Intolerance is one of the few things that can still safely be called evil.

After New Hampshire, Bush found a better slogan in "reformer with results." More important, in reaction to McCain, he became associated with two pillars of conservatism: limited government and faith. Bush was pushed into rediscovering the first of these by the logic of his defense of tax cuts against McCain's attacks. This is important because no innovation in conservatism—from compassionate conservatism to McCain's call for a renewal of American self-government—makes sense without an agenda of governmental retrenchment and lower taxes.

Tax cuts are often denounced as selfish and materialistic. What this view ignores is that limited government is a necessary condition for freedom, which has its roots in the protection of private property from the state. So to consider as selfish and unworthy efforts to strengthen Americans' claim to their earnings against a government that routinely takes 40 percent of their income is to misunderstand the basis of liberty. Deriding tax cuts as "materialistic" is a little like dismissing the right to vote as "procedural."

It is liberty, of course, that gives meaning to all other virtues of a republican people, including patriotism. A favorite line of pro-McCain neoconservatives is the rhetorical question, How can you hate the government and love your country? Well, the same way Andrew Jackson could hate the second Bank of the United States and still love his country. The same way conservatives in the 1960s and '70s could hate so much of what government did—from confiscatory taxation to corrupt welfare policies to soft criminal justice—but remain unabashed American patriots. In fact, the Jacksonian Scottish-Irish tradition that John McCain partly represents has always mixed distrust of government with a bloody-minded, unreconstructed nationalism (see Walter Russell Mead's brilliant piece on the Jacksonian tradition in the Winter issue of *The National Interest*).

The two attitudes are a natural fit—because a fighting patriotism belongs in the class of demanding virtues that tend to be smothered by the tender ministrations of the nanny state. Tocqueville warned of the infantilizing tendencies of big government:

> It covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate, to rise above the crowd. The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent and guided; men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting: such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies a people, till each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.

This is why McCain's focus on preserving the security of the modern welfare state runs counter to the virtues of duty, courage, and risk-taking that he argues for when, for instance, he berates the Clinton administration for its cautious conduct of the war over Kosovo. If government keeps us from smoking, and gives us our prescription drugs, and protects us from the distress of negative campaign ads, and devotes almost all of the resources thrown off by the new economy to preserving middle-class entitlements, why should it not also send its warriors into combat at 15,000 feet so they can be as safe and pampered as everyone else?

The other important conservative theme rediscovered, at least indirectly, by Bush during the campaign is faith. Compassionate conservatism was always coupled with Bush's evangelical Christianity, which he tends to describe in a sentimental rhetoric of "the heart." At one meeting of evangelicals in South Carolina, Rep. Duke Cunningham of California warmed up the crowd for Bush by weeping while talking about his faith. This is a style that will grate on Catholics, old-line Protestants, and Jews, a Promise Keepers Christianity of hugs and teary testimonials. But, given a less southern, less evangelical pitch, Bush's message of faith is extremely important, especially in light of the direct challenge to it by John McCain.

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McCain's Virginia Beach speech represented a capitulation to what Jean Bethke Elshtain has called "liberal monism," the idea that it isn't enough that state and church be separate, but that civic life should be vacuumed entirely of the irrational, illiberal traces of religious faith and dominated by a neutral language of secularism. Between the lines of McCain's speech was the implicit proposal for a swap of actual, organic religion—intolerant and exclusionary—for a new civic religion of his own devising (details to be announced).

This is a deeply unconservative notion. For better or worse, the Republican party is one of the nation's most important barriers to the total secularization of American public life. So it falls on Bush to defend America's true pluralism from the secularizers by championing and defending from the encroachments of the state the work of churches and synagogues.

Now, faced with a crush of advice to move to the center, the Bush campaign is reviving compassionate conservatism, when it should be leaving its contradictions and limp rhetoric behind. Bush would do better to develop his theme of a "reformer with results." That exact phrase is too defensively formulated with McCain in mind, but the campaign can work with it. Limited government and faith, freedom and religion, the two pillars Bush rediscovered in the primaries, should be integral to any message of conservative reform: Limiting the power of Washington is necessary to reforming it, and faith is the best guarantee of the virtues of a self-regulating people, of what Bush has called "the new responsibility era."

Of course, Bush has to find fresh ways to sell these conservative verities, to make himself "a different kind of Republican." The idea of limited government should be draped not just in the old rhetoric of tax cuts, but brightened by Wall Street and the Internet, by the imaginative, free-wheeling capitalist spirit captured in those fantastic Ameritrade TV ads. This might mean rejiggering his tax plan to include an idea like McCain's investor-friendly family savings accounts, and generally becoming more conversant with the web. Bush should align himself with the sensibility of the new investor class, encourage its growth, and use it as a wedge to reduce the reach of the welfare state.

As for faith, it shouldn't, of course, be touted in Jerry Falwell terms—not that that was ever in the offing. Like Jimmy Carter's, Bush's faith should be the background music to his opposition to the corruption and partisan poison of contemporary Washington; when Washington seems in need of redemption, there is something to be said for having a president who is "born again." Bush's hope should be that, just as in 1994, the Democratic attacks on Christian conservatives—just like John McCain's—will be recklessly overwrought, and interpreted by the faithful as a direct assault on them.

All of this should be wrapped in a patriotic appeal, for which—as McCain demonstrated, to his great credit—there is a tremendous hunger. It is freedom for which so many American men have died, and it is faith that every day prompts us, as McCain put it, to devote ourselves to causes greater than our self-interest. Bush should unashamedly borrow this language of patriotic purpose from McCain—and be quietly grateful to him for drubbing compassionate conservatism in New Hampshire. **NR**

The Media's George W.

He can't win for losing

MARK STEYN

THE morning after the '98 elections, ABC's Cokie Roberts rapped Bill Kristol over the knuckles. "You cannot win," she told him, "with angry white males. There just are not enough of you guys." The lesson of the mid-terms was that the GOP needed to reach out. "Look at the Republicans who did well," Cokie continued. "George W. Bush in Texas got almost 50 percent of the Hispanic vote." Yes, indeed. He was fluent in Spanish, which appeals to that minority, and he was fluent in gibberish—the touchy-feely Clintonian hogwash that the elusive "soccer mom" is said to go bananas over. Instead of angry white males, Dubya was reaching out to mildly dissatisfied white females and genial African-American males and other previously neglected demographics. As one of his Spanish-language commercials put it, "Vote for Bush—Who cares if he's not a Democrat?"

In other words, Dubya was the Republican candidate Cokie & Co. had been demanding for years. He favored "compassionate conservatism" and "an America where no child is denied the right to dream" and all the other hooey that has proved so effective in the Clinton era. Such skepticism as existed was confined mainly to us angry white males. Confronted by an affable, likeable GOP candidate, we were naturally suspicious: What sort of creature was this?

We were demoralized. The Democrats had demonized Newt as an extreme right-wing crazy. They were correct—apart from the "extreme" and "right-wing," that is. Newt spent his last year preemptively surrendering on anything of legislative consequence, but then, feeling bad at having abandoned another handful of his Four Great Truths, Five Pillars of the 21st Century, and Fourteen Steps to Renewing American Civilization, he'd go on TV and snarl at everyone in sight. For Republicans it was the worst of all worlds: a lily-livered ninny whom everyone else had somehow mistaken for a ferocious right-wing bastard. That's why some of us were willing to take a flier on Dubya: With his Señor Sensitive routine, he might come on like a lily-livered ninny to Cokie and the other sob sisters, but with a bit of luck he'd turn out to be a ferocious right-wing bastard underneath.

And so it has proved. The media wised up in February, when the internal contradictions of "compassionate conservatism" manifested themselves. Appearing at Bob Jones University, Dr. Compassionate chugged down a vial of bubbling potion, disappeared beneath the desk, and reemerged

Mr. Steyn is a columnist for Britain's *Daily Telegraph* and Canada's *National Post*.

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as the foaming, teeth-baring madman, Mr. Conservative. The two are not easily confused:

1999 Dubya: uniter.
2000 Dubya: divider.

1999 Dubya: feels your pain like Clinton.
2000 Dubya: twists the truth like Clinton.

1999 Dubya: fluently bilingual.
2000 Dubya: barely lingual.

1999 typical Dubya supporter: soccer mom.
2000 typical Dubya supporter: cracker.

1999 Dubya policies: miscellaneous.
2000 Dubya policy: miscegenation.

1999 key Dubya constituency: Hispanics.
2000 key Dubya constituency: Bob Jones III, Bob Jones IV, Bob Jones V, Bob Joneses VI–XIII.

1999 Dubya commercial: "Vote for Bush—Who cares if he's not a Democrat?"
2000 Dubya commercial: "Vote for McCain—Who cares if he shuts down breast-cancer clinics?"

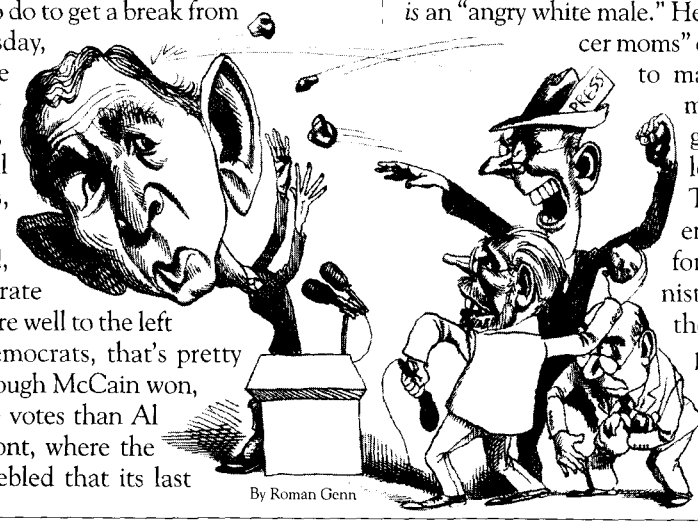
For the last five years, Democratic campaign commercials have gleefully shown the bland anonymous face of some unexceptional Republican congressman electronically morphing into the satanic smirk of Newt. But never has the transformation been so dizzyingly swift. By the time Super Tuesday rolled round, Dubya was getting worse press than Newt. The conventional wisdom is that he's an airhead frat-boy in the grip of anti-Catholic bigots whose ugly campaign is knee-deep in mud and running so far to the right that the terminally blinkered GOP establishment is heading for its third presidential defeat in a row because it's saddled with a strictly regional candidate with no appeal beyond his base of rednecks and Jesus freaks in Bible Belt backwaters like South Carolina and Virginia. And, er, North Dakota and Maine. Oh, and equally unrepresentative jigger-of-moonshine-and-bunk-up-with-your-sister Appalachian swamps like California, Ohio, Minnesota, and New York.

What does this guy have to do to get a break from the press? On Super Tuesday, Dubya won big, everywhere but four electorally insignificant New England states, and even there he did well enough. In Massachusetts, he managed to win a majority of Republican voters, and, given that wimpy, moderate Massachusetts Republicans are well to the left of, say, New Hampshire Democrats, that's pretty impressive. In Vermont, although McCain won, Dubya managed to get more votes than Al Gore. That's right: in Vermont, where the Republican party is so enfeebled that its last statewide candidate was that octogenarian dairy farmer and Democratic stooge Fred Tuttle. With two competitive primaries in a notoriously liberal state, the GOP loser wound up drawing more voters than the Democratic winner. If the Texas governor really does appeal only to his party's base, then that base is bigger and more enthused than it has been in years.

And, on the whole, the more the press throws its hands up in horror, the less the massive Republican primary crowds pay attention. The media shriek, "He's anti-Catholic!" The rest of us shrug, "So maybe he should have checked out what Bob Jones III said in 1974. Or Bob Jones VII said in 1943. Whatever." The media yell, "He's moved to the right!" The rest of us think, "Funny. He seems to be spouting exactly the same platitudes he was spouting a year ago." The media jeer, "He can't name Pakistan's general-of-the-week!" The rest of us reply, "Neither can we. What's your point?"

Look, I'm a Canadian. I'd like it if Dubya knew that the prime minister of Canada were called Jean Chrétien and not, as he seemed to think when he was set up by a CBC comedian, "Jean Poutine." But I don't believe your average American network anchor could name the guy either. Reporting the latest Dubya world-leaders "gaffe" in the *Times* of London, Ben Macintyre helpfully explained to his readers that poutine was, in fact, "a fast-food chain." Actually, it's a bowl of fries covered in gravy and cheese curds. It's available in Quebec fast-food chains, like La Belle Province and McDonald's, but it's not a fast-food chain per se. In a know-nothing culture, why should Dubya be expected to be the only fellow on top of things? John McCain, when he was campaigning in Vermont, couldn't name the state's governor or the prime minister of Ireland. Of course, if you'd asked him to name the prime minister of Canada, he might have snapped testily, "Listen, if you want a president who spent the early Seventies north of the border researching Canadian prime ministers, I'm not that man. What's important is that prescription drugs for seniors are a third of the price up there. Look, I'm the underdog here. Come and get me, Darth!"

Male readers will appreciate the position Dubya was in a month ago. You want to pull high-class dames like Cokie. You read all those articles saying women want guys who are compassionate, sensitive, sympathetic, know how to listen, respect their intelligence, blah, blah, blah. You do all that junk and then some toilet-mouthed, muscle-bound sexist clod shows up, and she can't wait to hop on his Harley and hit the freeway. McCain *is* an "angry white male." He has no discernible interest in "soccer moms" or their piffling concerns about how to make their boomer lifestyles even more pampered. He has a yawning gender gap that makes Bob Dole look like Julio Iglesias. On Super Tuesday, women went for Bush, veterans went for Bush, *everyone* went for Bush, except reporters, columnists, anchors, journalists, editors, thoughtful essayists, media-studies professors, network correspondents, city-desk interns, the girl standing by the photocopier, etc. But no matter how big Dubya wins, it's never big enough. In



By Roman Genn

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California, if you factor out minorities, more women voted for Bush than Gore. Despite the best efforts of the media to suggest that on abortion he has "moved to the right" (mediaspeak for staying exactly where you have been), he has the narrowest gender gap of any Republican in recent memory.

The first time I met him was at the Elks Lodge in Littleton, N.H., when his minders had decided to take the unprecedented step of letting him answer a few questions. "Governor," someone would ask, "are you concerned about recent improvements in North Korea's strategic-missile capability?" Dubya would furrow his brow, peer into the distance, then triumphantly produce a few words vaguely related to the topic at hand. As when one of Dionne Warwick's Psychic Friends manages to deduce that you have some uncertainties in your life right now, but that many of these situations will be resolved in the future, the crowd in Littleton was amazed and delighted. But what I remember most from that night and the Belknap County Lincoln Day dinner and his other appearances is the body language: At one point, he pulled up the chair next to mine and sprawled across the table; his pants leg rode up, and I got a glimpse of the famous boots with "GOVERNOR" running up the side. He's the most physically relaxed Republican in years. The overwhelming impression is of a man at ease with himself. It is simply not possible to look at him and believe that he's a bigot, a mudslinger, or—in McCain's silliest miscalculation—a "truth-twister like Clinton." If it's "authenticity" you're after, the most authentic moment for me came after those breast-cancer radio commercials: McCain had revealed that his sister suffers from breast cancer, so reporters scrambled after Bush to ask whether, in light of the senator's disclosure, he now wished to apologize for his attack ads. "No," he said, basically. And quite right: Why should his view of McCain's actions be colored by Gore-like personal disclosures? But, unlike Newt or Bob Dole, he was able to stick to his guns without seeming (dread word!) "mean-spirited." The media resent Bush because, unlike McCain, he refuses to play along with their limited range of narratives.

Ever since February 1, the press has played a game of self-fulfilling prophecy. They keep insisting that Humpty Dubya has had a great fall and that all the GOP's horses and all the GOP's men can't put him together again. But it isn't happening. The question the media have to ask themselves now is what it's going to take to destroy Dubya. To date, everything they've slung at him—cocaine, McCain, poutine—has bounced off, and what's left is the same affable, likeable fellow Cokie was taken by in November '98, amiably ploughing through his policy positions: extending "excess benefit" provisions, Title I funding, the need for IRAs for HMOs—or is it vice versa? "Affable" and "likeable" will go a long way, and, unlike tan polo shirts, they're not something you can buy off the rack from Naomi Wolf. It will be a close race this year, but Dubya can still pull it off, if he can keep his head while all about him are losing theirs:

He's gone negative! He's moved to the right! He's a religious bigot! He's using breasts as a wedge issue! He's under the control of the forces of evil!

And all Dubya has to do is take a deep breath, grin, and say, as someone else once said: There you go again. **NR**

What Now?

A roundup of advice for Bush

RICHARD BROOKHISER

ONE temptation in giving advice is to ask for conversions on issues; if the correct position is shared by most Americans, all the better. So will W. support medical marijuana or ending our immigration party (BYOC—bring your own cousins)? No way—so let it be. Another temptation is to give staff advice: Fire this one, hire that one. In the end, though, a candidate makes or breaks himself. Here then are my four points.

Stay on message. Your victory interviews Super Tuesday night hit tax cuts and education reform (vouchers and accountability). These are good ideas, popular ideas, and ideas Al Gore can't poach, since he is committed to "risky scheme" and the NEA. Keep it coming.

Stay home. Don't take foreign trips to show that you know where the Grecians live. Reporters will ambush you with questions ("How many nations share a border with Iceland?") and headline every mistake. Give a major speech on China—"My administration will defend Taiwan and our military secrets, and refuse illegal campaign contributions"—and Mexico—"We will continue to support trade and economic development" (so they won't all have to move here).

Keep busy. Austin is a nice place, but you'll carry Texas. Hit the trail, cowpoke.

Forget your name. When your father campaigned with you in New Hampshire, you choked so hard you needed a Heimlich maneuver. George H. W. Bush is indeed a good man. But you're a better politician, and you're different. Run your own race.

—Mr. Brookhiser is an NR *senior editor.*

DANIEL CASSE

INTEGRITY. *Honor. Character.* These words should have no role in George W. Bush's campaign for president. Republicans have been unsuccessfully running "character" campaigns against Clinton for eight years. It is time to stop rewarding Democrats with such a predictable and easily defeated tactic.

Rather than talk about "restoring honor to the White House," Bush needs to argue vigorously that Gore's ideas are even more dangerous than his unbridled ambition. To do this requires not only a set of better ideas but also a penetrating critique of the Gore agenda. That critique has been conspicuous by its absence in the race thus far. Reminding voters of the Buddhist temple and "no controlling legal authority" is no substitute.

Bill Bradley learned this lesson the hard way. Intoxicated by his own integrity, he tried playing the character card in his

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Drug warriors claim to be protecting kids.

In fact they are endangering our children!

- **Surveys show that 90% of of high school students find marijuana easy to get. They report marijuana is easier to buy than alcohol. You don't find anyone trying to sell booze in school yards since the repeal of alcohol prohibition![1]**
- **Studies of DARE, the widely used drug education program, show that it is ineffective and may even be harmful. Exaggerating the dangers of marijuana to grade schoolers creates skepticism among teenagers about the real dangers of hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin, alcohol and tobacco. This encourages experi entation and use.[2]**
- **Draconian mandatory sentencing for adults along with big money from the black market in drugs draws our young people into the world of crime.[3]**
- **Funds that should be spent for building new schools and colleges have been channeled into building new prisons for the incarceration of our young people.[4]**

[1] Johnston, L., Bachman, J. & O'Malley, P., National Survey Results from the Monitoring the Future Study, Vol. 1, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (1999), p. 270, Table 30; online version of MTF survey; Luntz Research Companies, National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse II: Teens and Their Parents, New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (1996). *[2] Rosenbaum, Dennis, Assessing the Effects of School based Drug Education: A Six Year Multilevel Analysis of Project DARE, Abstract (1998 April 6); Ennett, S.T., et al., "How Effective Is Drug Abuse Resistance Education? A Meta Analysis of Project DARE Outcome Evaluations," American Journal of Public Health, 84: 13941401 (1994); Brown, J. H., D'Emidio Caston, M. & Pollard, J., "Students and Substances: Social Power in Drug Education," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (EEPA), 19, 1, (1997) pp. 6582.* *[3] "A Wiser Course: Ending Drug Prohibition," Report of the Committee on Drugs and the Law, The Association of the Bar of the City of New York, Volume 49, Number 5, June 1994; Steven Duke and Albert Gross, "America's Longest War," TarcherPutnam, 1993 p. 89.* *[4] Ambrosio, TaraJen and Vincent Schiraldi. (1997) From Classrooms to Cellblocks: A National Perspective. Washington DC: The Justice Policy Institute; National Association of State Budget Officers, 1995 State Expenditures Report, Washington D.C.: National Association of State Budget Officers (1996); Ambrosio, T. & Schiraldi, V., "Trends in State Spending, 19871995," Executive Summary February 1997, Washington D.C.: The Justice Policy Institute (1997).*

Politicians that justify the War on Drugs to "protect our children" are either fools or knaves.

For more information visit: www.csdp.org.
Common Sense for Drug Policy Kevin B. Zeese President 703-354-9050, 703-354-5695 (fax), info@csdp.org

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bumbling, reticent way. Gore blasted back with a frightening vision of Bradley's voucherized school system and Medicare sold to the highest bidder.

John McCain's short-lived popularity was *not* a function of his indisputable character and integrity. He was popular because he took the longest, sharpest stick he could find and stuck it into the eye of every overbearing GOP pooh-bah in the country. But after the novelty of this act wore off, McCain, like President Bush and Sen. Dole before him, had nothing left to offer voters but his character. Bush needs to avoid this mistake and enter the fall campaign more heavily armed.

—Mr. Casse is a senior director of the White House Writers Group, a public policy communications firm.

DAVID FRUM

1) Resurrect Rex Harrison for English-language-immersion lessons;

2) Place a phone call to the Saudis and Kuwaitis to remind them of their debt to the Bush family—and to gently hint that the time may have come for $45-a-barrel oil;

3) Hope like hell that Alan Greenspan does his duty by his party and raises interest rates at least a couple of points before Memorial Day.

—Mr. Frum's current book is The '70s—The Decade That Brought You Modern Life (For Better or Worse).

DAVID GELERNTER

ELECTIONS are won when vague, ubiquitous knowledge crystallizes around the right words. Everyone knows that Clinton-Gore is a moral tragedy; Bush's job is to say so in the right way. Americans are sick of being told how happy we are. These messages are demeaning, because they assume that happiness can be measured by polls and bought for cash. Bush should ask: Is America a better place to rear your children today than eight years ago? But he can't be preacherly. He should start by quoting Omar Bradley: "I would not have us think less of ourselves than we should." Look around you, Bush needs to say; the business boom is great. But is this *it*? Are we satisfied? With public schools that embarrass us every day? A public culture we struggle to protect our children against? The armed forces as an institute for experimental feminonics? Americans pray that their sons won't take after the president, that their daughters keep far away from him and all his sleazeball type. Would Omar Bradley have been satisfied? Could you vote for more of this and still face yourself in the mirror?

Before talking about taxes, establish some premises. ("The budget is balanced because you've been sending in dumptruckloads of cash. This is YOUR MONEY, not Washington's!") Bush should be the technology man; Gore has nothing to offer. I assume McCain will be his running mate—a bookend to the left to keep him from slouching. Still: It all comes down to one big question. If Bush can diagnose America's moral condition in 20 words or less, he wins.

—Mr. Gelernter's most recent book is Machine Beauty.

JEFFREY HART

BUSH can defeat Gore, but the fight will be difficult. Bush emerged from Texas into general awareness positioned on the center-right, which seems exactly the best place for him to be now. He had demonstrated appeal in Texas far beyond traditional GOP voters. Shocked in New Hampshire, he threw away that identity in South Carolina. In no subsequent primary did he go beyond the old GOP core, and his early and promising identity became blurred.

In 1992, Bill Clinton signaled his independence—feigned, of course—with his dissing of Sister Souljah at a Jesse Jackson event. This helped Clinton elsewhere. Bush probably needs such a maneuver vis-à-vis Pat Robertson, who is negative nationally.

The Bush campaign should decide on *three or four issues* to put at the top of the agenda and hammer home relentlessly. Currently, Bush is all over the place, with a long shopping list of good things. A hierarchy must be established.

The model should be Jack Kennedy's campaign of 1960, which stressed over and over again:

1. The missile gap (fictitious).
2. Castro and Cuba 90 miles off our shore.
3. Get America moving again.
4. We can do better ("Let the torch be passed to a new generation . . . ").

The Bush themes for a very different era—Medicare, Social Security, education—should be tailored to the present time. But they should be both specific (as in 1 and 2 above) and symbolic/general. Consult a poet, maybe Mark Helprin.

Let's not attack Gore as soft on breast cancer.

Willie Hortonize Al Sharpton. Shots of Gore and Sharpton with Freddy's Fashion Mart burning in the background. Buddhist nuns and Tawana will be fun to kick around.

Gore will pick Dianne Feinstein.

Screw Gore by picking Colin Powell, a triple-threat man: 1) he shores up perceived foreign-policy weakness; 2) he is a perceived war hero; 3) he threatens Gore's black base, will lure liberals, and is a good role model in contrast to the clowns the Democrats stroke.

—Mr. Hart is an NR *senior editor.*

LAWRENCE KUDLOW

BUSH should be unflinching in defense of his core message of broad-based personal tax-rate reduction. This would show the electorate a Reagan-like strength of character, commitment of purpose, and clear policy compass.

Indeed, Bush should broaden his tax message to one of tax reform as well as tax reduction, including relief for businesses and investors. He should expand his tax proposal to include super-saver unlimited and universal (education, health-care, retirement, home-buying) IRA and 401(k)-type accounts. He should also specify a new-economy target of 4 percent to 5 percent national growth.

For monetary reform, he should limit the Federal Reserve's role in the economy to price stability and a stable dollar (relative to gold and foreign-exchange rates), in place of the Fed's

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current self-justified mission of controlling every economic variable in sight.

Bush should also carefully explain why tax cuts, not federal-debt elimination, will strengthen Social Security. Voters must understand that in coming years only two workers will be available to support each retiring beneficiary. Therefore, worker productivity and economic expansion must be maximized.

Then Bush should lay out his plan for worker-owned personal accounts that will increase retirement returns and reduce the unfunded future liabilities of the Social Security system by gradually shifting the system from a pay-as-you-go transfer plan to a truly vested defined-contribution plan.

Finally, he should bring in Michael Dell to create an Information Age vision of federal-spending reform and government downsizing with an Internet-based system that slashes bureaucratic layers and eliminates antiquated and redundant departments, agencies, and programs.

—Mr. Kudlow is an NR *contributing editor.*

RUSH LIMBAUGH

1) Don't believe the myth that the Republican party is "fractured" and needs "healing." There is no rift in the GOP. In choosing our nominee, there has been a noteworthy and increasing consensus. No honest examination can conclude anything other than the obvious fact that the Republican party is energized. If you ask me, the party in big trouble is the Democrat party. With this economy, Gore should have coasted to victory, and no one, especially Bradley, should have been able to raise $20 million to oppose him. Therefore . . .

2) Don't move to "the center." There is already a concerted effort by the press to insist that Bush can't win with the voters he's got. He has to make a pitch to moderates and independents. Gazillions of them—so numerous that even if McCain had gotten them all, he'd still have lost.

This is simply a ploy to tempt Bush into betraying those who voted for him. To the Bush team: Don't get sucked in by this mantra that you can't win without McCain people. McCain lost everywhere he tried except for five small Northeastern states, Michigan, and his home state of Arizona. You have already demonstrated that you have a winning message. Don't turn your back on it. Don't give up ground you've conquered.

The media says, "Bush needs crossovers or he can't win." Yet that is never said about Gore. It is also never reported that Bush is running stronger with women than either McCain or Gore. Have you heard the term "gender gap" lately? I didn't think so.

3) Don't champion campaign-finance reform. In poll after poll asking voters to identify issues most important to them, campaign-finance reform shows up at 1 percent—if it shows up at all. That issue simply isn't one on which presidential votes turn. You can't argue that campaign-finance reform is a huge issue when the two guys who ran on it—McCain and Bradley—are out of the race. (Of course, campaign-finance reform could be an issue—if Bush combined it with the issue of crimes committed by a sitting vice president. As in Al "Maria-Hsia-is-my-friend" Gore.)

4) Do see to it that the base stays energized. The Reagan base in the GOP is more excited and stirred up than at any time I remember in the nearly twelve years I have been doing my national show. It is Bush's responsibility to keep this fire burning in everyone. Right now, they want to break the speed limit to get to the polling place; it is up to the candidate to keep them at this pitch throughout the year.

5) Do stay on offense. The way to do that is to continue to hammer on Algore. Getting rid of the Clinton-Gore mob is the single most motivating factor for Republican voters—fumigating D.C. and not letting Gore get away with the lies and rhetorical bullying that Clinton got away with. Let Gore whine about "partisan attacks" (while characterizing Bush as a racist, sexist, homophobic environmental terrorist). Let the media moan about how "mean," "bitter," "divisive," and "nasty" the campaign is (while tracking down every unsourced rumor about the Republican nominee).

Every time Gore tries to exploit any American problem, there's a ready response: "You've had seven years; why haven't you fixed it?"

The message is reform, renewal, and change—and Bush owns it.

—Mr. Limbaugh is king of radio.

ROB LONG

Be bold. April will be a crucial month: The Clinton/Gore team will hammer you hard about gun control on the anniversary of Columbine. What if you went to the NRA and helped craft a compromise on gun control? Don't like that one? How about: Do whatever it takes to get John McCain and Pat Robertson in a room together, and broker some kind of rapprochement. Okay, okay. But what about: Take a realistic pro-life stand. Remind pro-lifers that the great civil and social movements of our country did not succeed through direct-mail pieces to the converted, but through persuasion.

Be active. Pretend, for a short minute, that you are Bill Clinton. What would he do? He would pepper the media with mini-initiatives. Do that: Hold a few "school choice" events, publicize inner-city charities that work, appear at national parks and public/private-initiative sites—seize every possible opportunity to control the story of your campaign. Appear with a normal American family and show them how much they'd get back if your tax cut were put in place. It should always be about "what George W. Bush will do as president," never "how George W. Bush responded to Gore's attack." And the only way to remain the star of the story is to write the story yourself.

Be simple. Don't try to outsmart everyone. Don't try to prove that you "have depth," or whatever it is Judy Woodruff & Co. seem to want from you. Say a few things, but make them resonant. Cutting taxes is about "fairness"—sure, the economy is good right now, but if you're a parent thinking about college tuition, a worker thinking about retirement, a young couple just starting out, fairness means something. Don't bother getting into the details of school choice—stick with the basics: Is the post office better because of Federal Express? Remember: You are a man of action. Gore is all talk.

Be real. Stop answering questions in "media-speak." Answer them like a human being.

Be on the attack, from now to November. Repeat after me: "Al

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Gore is a lying, race-baiting Eddie Haskell who will say and do anything to get elected, who flagrantly broke campaign-finance laws and now has the gall to give pious lectures about it." Say this over and over and over again to yourself, and then have your spokesmen say it for you to the press.

—Mr. Long is an NR *contributing editor.*

RICHARD LOWRY

1) Don't apologize for anything. The idea that you ran an especially dirty campaign is fiction. In his sanctimonious way, John McCain was just as tough, and arguably more dishonest.

2) Widen your circle. It needs to include someone with the authority to challenge you as your chummy "Austin troika" can't.

3) Hold firm on campaign-finance reform. If you don't, it will indelibly mark you as unprincipled and weak.

4) Develop new issues. It's not too late to retool yet again. "Moving to the center" shouldn't mean watering down current positions, but staking out fresh ones to attract new voters (see Kudlow, Ponnuru, O'Sullivan).

5) Criticize bilingual education. It's a perfect example of what you call "the soft bigotry of low expectations." Challenging it would represent a substantive appeal to the patriotic/nationalist sentiment symbolically tapped by McCain.

6) Stand up straight. Your shrugging, stooping, aw-shucks body language betrays too much of the old Andover/Yale class clown.

7) Promise never again to do Letterman.

—Mr. Lowry is NR*'s editor.*

PEGGY NOONAN

BUSH right now has to absorb a number of things, and quickly. There will be no rest for the weary—it's a nonstop campaign cycle now, no down times. Every moment between now and Nov. 7 counts. He will have to reconcile himself to the fact that in this fight he must be a tough fighter—someone who hits hard and, when downed, gets quickly off the canvas. Bush seems a man who wants to put his program forward and speak of it persuasively. But from Gore he will receive daily jabs, some of them sharp and memorable. Bush must jab first, and hard. He must hit Gore every day the next few months over scandal, corruption, illegality, and lying. He must hit Gore every day with well-researched assertions regarding Gore's radicalism on the environment, etc. Bush must do this with clear and piercing words that cannot be evaded, ducked. Gore must be put in the position of defending himself constantly, so that by the weekend talk shows a regular question from the anchor becomes, "So what did Al Gore defend himself with this week?" There are many reasons this pugnacious and combative stance must be taken, and only one is the fact that this is what Gore is doing and plans to do to Bush. By the summer, Bush should be speaking persuasively of what he stands for and what he means to do—and that, one hopes, will be the meat of the campaign in the fall. But for now, fight. Hard.

—Ms. Noonan's new book is The Case Against Hillary Clinton.

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

HERE are some modest proposals:

1. An Alternative *Maximum* Tax. Don't crumple up before Democratic charges that a tax cut will mainly benefit the rich. Reply by proposing legislation to limit federal, state, and local income and Social Security taxes *combined* to 33 percent of any taxpayer's income as a matter of principle. If Gore objects, ask him what he considers a fair maximum tax take. Make him justify confiscation.

2. A full-scale missile-defense shield. If Gore objects, remind him that, after all, he invented it.

3. A review of judicial review. For instance, when next the Supreme Court makes some law of its own, remind Congress that Article III, Section 2, is part of the U.S. Constitution. If Gore objects, tell a lawyer joke at his expense.

4. A higher standard of care. Enable faith-based organizations to pay benefits at least equal to those available through state welfare agencies—thus making it easier for recipients to embark on the more challenging regimen of moral and psychological recovery. If Gore objects, accuse him of being "obsessed" with the religious Right.

5. The sole superpower. Discourage the emergence of a rival European superpower by inviting Britain and Eastern Europe to join NAFTA and by offering to extend the anti-missile shield to Europe in return for the "postponement" of the European Security and Defense Identity that threatens to undermine U.S. leadership in NATO. If Gore objects, ask him to explain how he saved *Russia* for the West.

And in general, remember that conservative victories today can very rarely be won by stealth or by half-measures. If you need any proof of that, consider Florida, where your brother, hoping to avoid a political row over racial preferences, adopted a feeble compromise instead—and has been rewarded with riots, boycotts, a massive demonstration of 11,000 people, and a long-running political crisis that shows no sign of ending.

—Mr. O'Sullivan is an NR *editor-at-large.*

JOHN PODHORETZ

THE problem with George W. Bush has nothing to do with the policies he espouses, which are far more substantive (and more moderate) than Gore's. Unlike, say, his father's 1992 campaign or the Dole 1996 campaign, the Bush campaign is the real campaign of ideas in this race. But Bush gives no sign that he has any innate understanding of, or feeling for, the ideas his campaign has generated. That is due to his inarticulateness on the stump, off the cuff, and in debate. If he does not conquer his tendency to make a syntactical hash of the English language and instead continues to utter solecisms that warm the satirical hearts of Leno and Letterman, his surely undeserved reputation as an unprepared lightweight will only deepen. Unless he is able to explain the virtues of his tax cut more eloquently than he has in the past, for example, the ruthless and unscrupulous Gore will make mincemeat of him in their face-to-face confrontations. The tax cut will become a central issue in the campaign, whether or not Bush now wants it to be—so he is going to have

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to convince a skeptical public of its value in the face of media hostility and the Clinton-Gore two-step of attacking the Bush tax cut while offering a smaller Democratic version. Somehow, Bush needs to relax into a more fluid and conversational way of expressing the ideas animating his campaign. How he achieves this I don't know, but if he doesn't, he's finished.

—Mr. Podhoretz is a columnist for the New York Post.

RAMESH PONNURU

REPUBLICANS should not hesitate to take on Al Gore over the Kyoto global-warming accord. That accord would likely require massive increases in taxes on energy consumption. Environmentalists are especially eager to target SUVs for extinction. Some estimates put the price tag of Kyoto at $2,000 annually for the typical family of four. Kyoto is the first threat liberals have posed to middle-class interests since the 1994 health-care debacle. It is also emblematic of liberalism's disdain for cars, and the way of life widespread ownership of cars makes possible. Gore still wants to eliminate the internal-combustion engine, and his environmentalist allies use federal funds to block road construction. With their campaign against sprawl, the environmentalists intend to increase congestion. As Jonathan Adler recommended in these pages last June, one Republican bumper sticker this fall should be: "Stuck in traffic? Blame Al Gore."

This year presents a great opportunity to make that case, for two reasons. Voters are already irritated by rising gas prices. And it is in the Midwest—where cars are made, and SUVs are a boon in winter—that the election will be decided.

—Mr. Ponnuru is an NR *senior editor.*

FRED SIEGEL

BUSH has now rallied the triumphant forces that brought his father 38 percent of the vote and Bob Dole 41 percent. He has been defined so far as a candidate of the Christian Right and a Texan. This will surprise him, but, as the campaigns of John Connally and Phil Gramm make clear, many Americans are less than fond of Texans. If Bush is going to have a shot at even keeping it close, he will have to confound some of his critics. First of all, he can rediscover his northern roots. He might even think about supporting the Northeast and Midwest in their fight with Texans over lowering oil prices by releasing some of the strategic petroleum reserve. Then, before Gore can define Texas by the smog in Houston and the shantytowns along the Rio Grande, Bush has to present an image of the high-tech Texas centered around Austin. In fact, W. has to cast himself as a modernizer willing to shed the conflicts of the 1960s in order to lead the way into the new entrepreneurial economy already visible in Texas. I won't suggest how he can reach out to McCain supporters, since that may depend on negotiations with the senator himself. But in the meantime, he can push Al Gore to own up to his mistake in elevating Al Sharpton, just as Bush himself apologized for his own mistake at Bob Jones. But even if he does all this, he will still be drawing for an inside straight.

—Mr. Siegel's book The Future Once Happened Here *has just been issued in paperback.*

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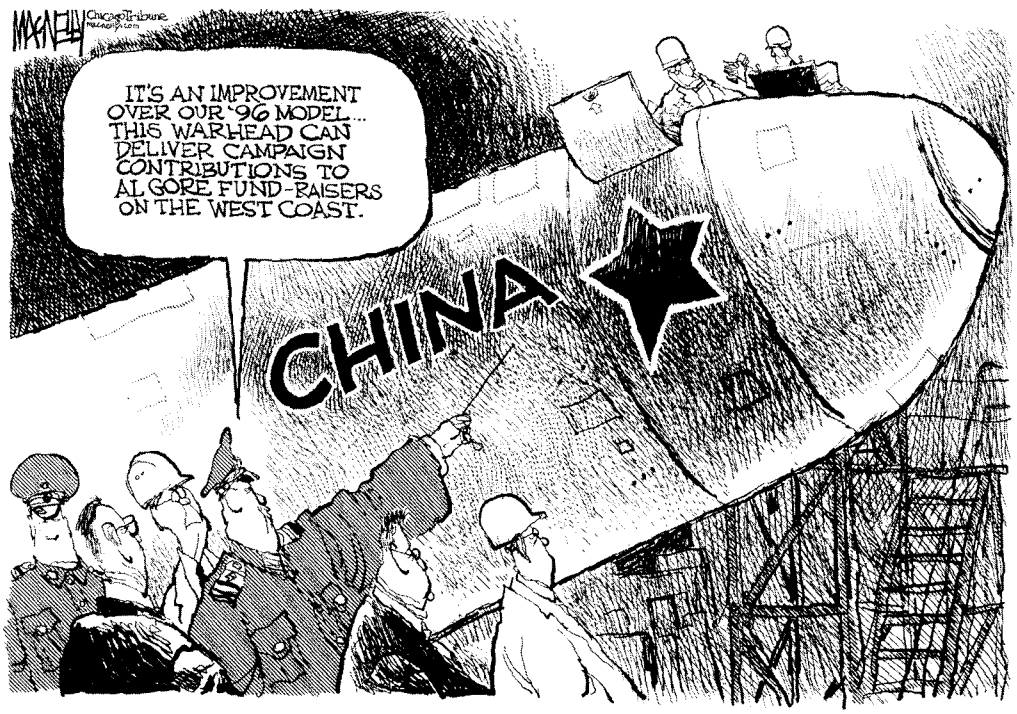
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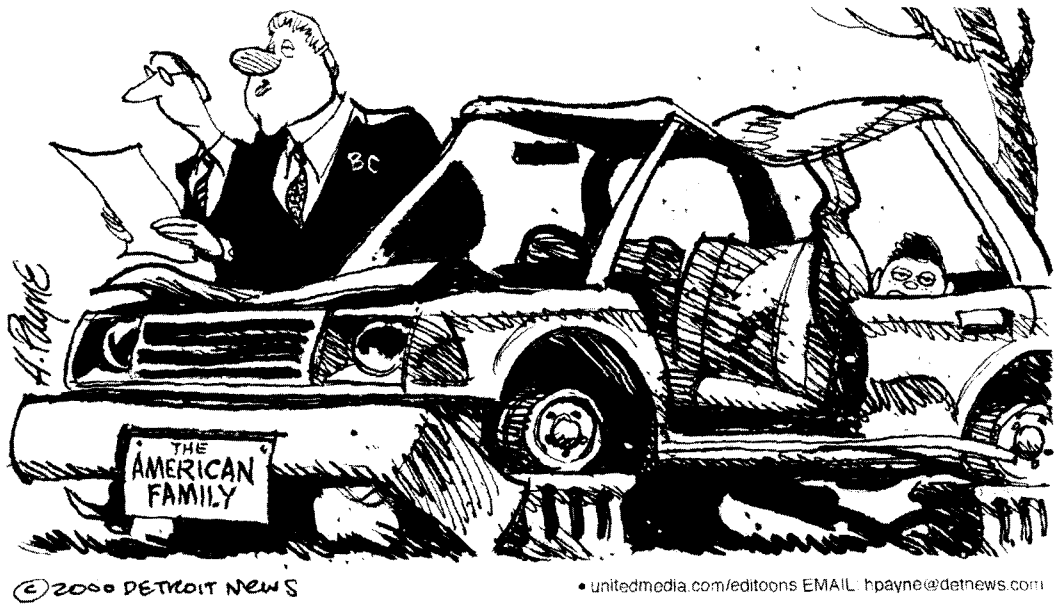

"CLEARLY, WHAT IS THREATENING OUR CHILDREN IS THE LACK OF A CHILD SAFETY GUN LOCK MANDATE."

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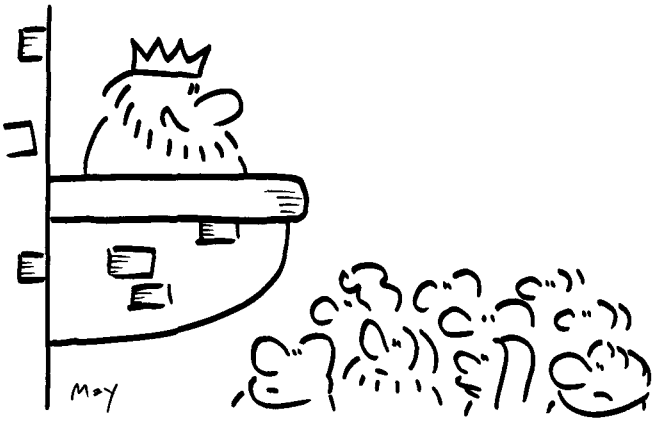
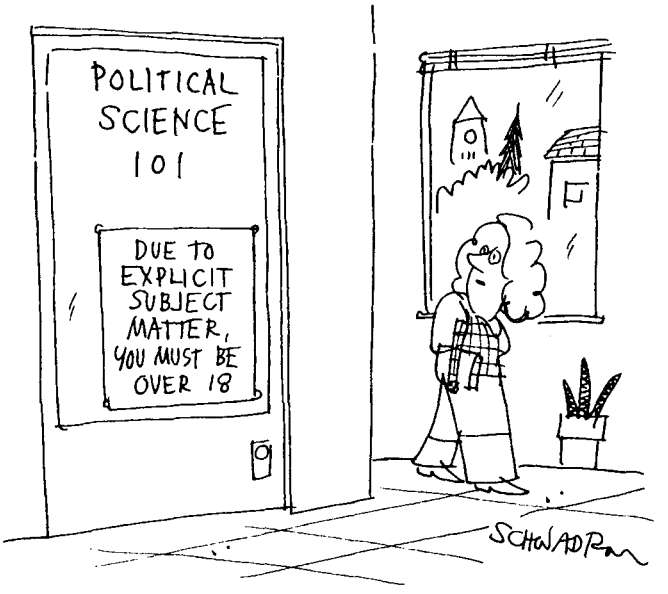
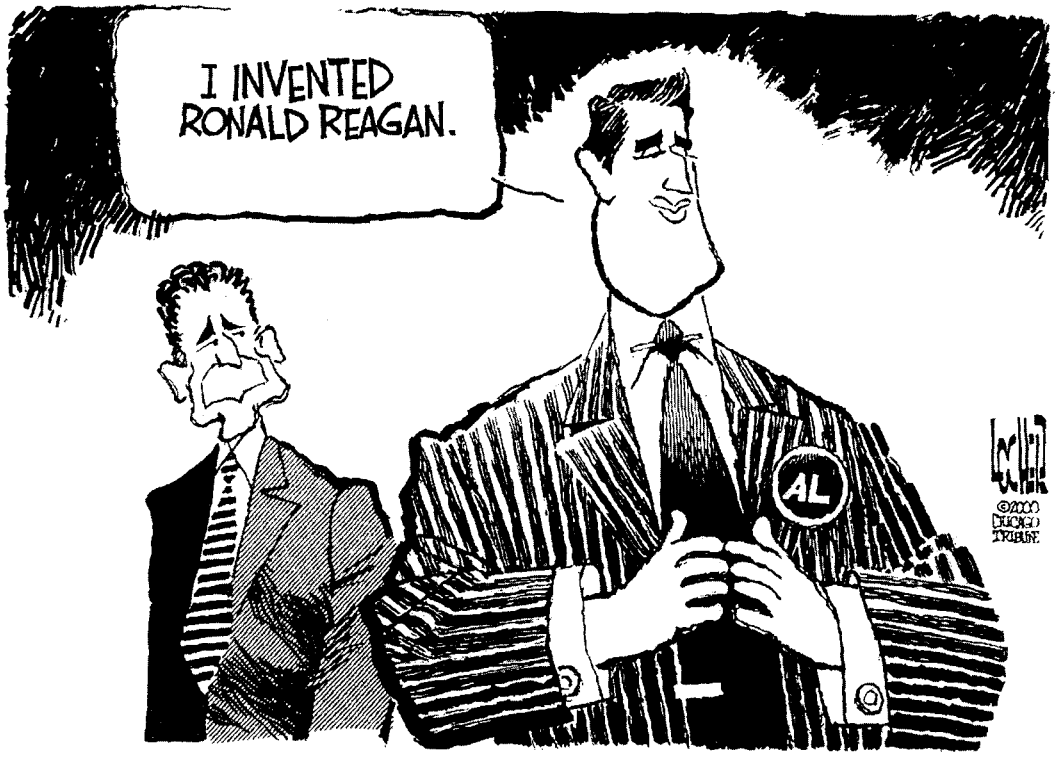


"Okay, we lost the war and we're bankrupt—that's why they put erasers on the ends of pencils."





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THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.

March 14, 2000

Dear APPLICANT,

Thanks very much for your interest in being my running mate. Tipper and I are excited about moving forward with this phase of our historic campaign!

By now, the blood workup has been sent to the lab and the hair and skin samples are being prepared for analysis. Again, thank you for your prompt and cooperative attitude during this unpleasant but necessary procedure.

Basically, as you all know, the blood sample is a way for us to get to know you a little bit better—to familiarize ourselves with you and your family. A lot of past applicants have told us that this is the best part of the whole process! And in one case in particular, an applicant was grateful to learn about his very severe cholesterol problem (Hi, Jesse!). The really great thing about the blood workup is that it never lies—it doesn't even stretch the truth a bit (unlike some people! Believe me, I'm working on it!). So I'm sure you understand why this is so crucial.

The hair sample is really kind of a two-birds-with-one-stone situation. First, it allows us to detect any chemical narcotic residue in the protein strands. But more importantly, it allows us to determine which products our stylist might recommend to treat your distinct hair type (Hi, Jesse!).

Finally, as must be obvious, the skin sample is a means of determining precise racial background and, from that, a potential campaign-stop itinerary.

For those of you who have completed the first part of this survey—the Standard Personality Disorder Identification Test—we thank you. I'm sure you all agree that the SPDIT wasn't nearly as difficult as it sounded! All you had to do was arrange a few shapes and colors in a few simple patterns. For those of you who did not complete the Test or who refused for personal reasons (Hi, Jesse!), we urge you once again to think about doing so. Remember: None of the data we collect will be used to determine who is selected; rather, we use the information to determine how best to utilize the selectee. So think about it.

Whew! The icky part is over! Now for the easy part. The following is a series of questions we've come up with that will help us get "on the same page," as they say. By no means is this to be thought of as a "quiz" or a "test." What we want is to get a sense of how you, as a potential candidate, might fit in with our organization.

1. Please rank the following presidents in order, best to worst, IN YOUR OPINION:

FDR, JFK, Abraham Lincoln, James Madison, Bill Clinton, James Polk

2. Please rank the following presidents in order, best to worst, IN YOUR OPINION:

FDR, JFK, Abraham Lincoln, James Madison, Bill Clinton, James Polk

(Please note: While the preceding two questions are identical, your answers need not be.)

3. IN YOUR OPINION, what is the "riskiest" economic policy the next president might support? *New social programs. Campaign-finance reform. Tax cuts. School choice.* (Circle one.)

4. IN YOUR OPINION, what is the proper role of the vice president? *To raise money. To serve the current president in an advisory capacity. To sit tight. To attack the opposition. To maintain and enforce the high standards of the office.* (Circle one, but not the one you think.)

5. Do you have a gay relative? Is that relative flamboyant?

6. Are you a female? [If yes, please skip to question 12.]

7. Are you African American? [If yes, please skip to question 13.]

8. Are you a leader and/or president of a trade union? [If so, you're reading the wrong form. The form you want is Gore2000 Form 10A, "How to Collaborate Without Collaborating."]

9. Are you a moderate liberal with solid interest-group ties with a gay-friendly staff and at least one black and/or Hispanic relation who is still living? [If yes, please skip to question 14.]

10. If the nominee for president were wearing a brown/olive combination, you as vice presidential nominee might wear: *The same. Some kind of taupe. Muted gray. Navy blue. What the colorist lays out for me.* (Circle one.)

11. Essay Question: Complete the following: "It will be a good deal easier for me, as a candidate for vice president, to criticize Bill Clinton's character because . . . " (250-word minimum)

12. Are you Kathleen Kennedy Townsend? [If yes, please gather all relevant tax materials and wait by the phone. If no, please return to the questionnaire.]

13. Hi, Jesse!

14. Congratulations! Welcome to the ticket! What is your shoe size?

Thank you all for your time and your thoughts. We'll get back to you just as soon as we possibly can.

Al

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BOOKS, ARTS & MANNERS

All About Hillary

DANIELLE CRITTENDEN

The Case Against Hillary Clinton, by Peggy Noonan (Regan Books, 181 pp., $23)

RECENTLY I watched a television biography of Hillary Clinton and found myself startled, as I always am, by the number of times she has radically changed her look. It's not just her hair (during the first year of the Clinton administration I lost count after eleven styles), it's her whole persona. In the space of that first year, she went from the hair-banded, suit-wearing tough campaigner of 1992 to the frumpy, polka-dot-dress-wearing June Cleaver of her health-care crusade. In the blink of an eye, she's Madison Avenue Barbie, stretched out across the cover of *Vogue*. Now, back in campaign mode, she has adopted the look of a New York local-news anchor: "Hillary Clinton: She's On Your Side."

These changes are so dizzyingly frequent that even the most nonpartisan observer is left to wonder: What is she up to? Who is she really? And what does she want?

Depending on your viewpoint, she's one or several of the following: (a) a good woman who made a bad marriage and has made the best of it; (b) the smart cookie behind Bill Clinton's rise to the presidency; (c) the blameless victim of highly partisan political attacks; (d) the heroine in a feminist fairy tale, finally breaking free to realize her own identity; (e) a power-mad Black Queen,

Hillary Clinton by Ken Westphal

willing to do anything and walk over anyone to hold on to power.

Even those closest to Hillary Clinton admit to being baffled by her. Hillary herself has wisely refused to speak candidly to any would-be Boswell. Meanwhile, every available legal document has been parsed; virtually every friend and acquaintance willing to speak on the record has been interviewed.

It's hard to imagine that yet another book about Hillary wouldn't simply pose the same questions and rehash the same incidents: the Wellesley commencement speech that got reprinted in *Life* magazine; Hillary's work on the Watergate impeachment committee; her first encounter with Bill in the Yale Law School library; their Arkansas years; the couple's appearance on 60 *Minutes*, defending their marriage; her involvement in the travel-office firings; her failed health-care bill; Whitewater; Vince Foster's suicide; the reappearance of the missing billing records; her "vast, right-wing conspiracy" comment on the *Today* show; her announcement that she will run for senator from New York. Ho-hum. Can't we have something new?

Well, now we do. Peggy Noonan's *The Case Against Hillary Clinton* is so breathtakingly original—in its writing, its observations, and its wit—that it will mesmerize even the most wearied and oversaturated Hillary observer. Just when you thought you couldn't read another word about the First Lady—surprise!—you will relish every clever, gossipy, funny, moving, indignant page of it.

Noonan, a former speechwriter for Ronald Reagan, recognizes that others have made the political case against Hillary (Barbara Olson in *Hell to Pay* best of all). She recognizes, too, that the market for sympathetic biographies has been fully sated by Gail Sheehy and David Brock. Instead, Noonan sets out to make the moral case against Hillary Clinton.

She does this, she writes, at the invitation of the First Lady herself. "[Mrs. Clinton] has been asking to hear the views of New Yorkers as she proceeds on her listening tour," and Noonan, a native New Yorker, is prepared to give her an earful. But Noonan does it in her own patented way—sharing the meditations she has while lying on the sofa watching Hillary on TV and crafting, with the art of a novelist, the scene of Hillary's victory speech should the First Lady win.

At one point Noonan evokes the typical female New York voter Hillary is trying to reach: the sort of woman who feels uncomfortable about judging the First Lady too harshly, and may even be considering voting for her. This voter reminds Noonan of a friend she grew up with in Massapequa, Long Island—a place where "the women work in restaurants and own delicatessens, work in real estate offices and teach kids, are nurses and stay-at-home mothers, and most of them look like mothers and grandmothers because they are."

Noonan imagines this woman at Jones Beach, circa August 2000. She has just settled her kids in the sand and finally has a moment to lie back on her

Danielle Crittenden is a columnist for the *New York Post* and the author of *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman.*

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towel next to her husband. She opens a magazine:

> [Hillary's] on the cover. And you look at it. And you think what you always think when you see Hillary, which is that you don't really know what to think. If the piece you're about to read is highly critical, a real slam, you'll suspect it's exaggerated and partisan and mean. But if it's complimentary you'll think it's some puff piece, and you'll feel unsatisfied because you know, you can tell, there's something . . . not so great there.
>
> And you don't think you're an important person but you are. Because what you're thinking as you look at the picture on the magazine at the beach . . . will determine the future of Clintonism in America.
>
> You know she's trying to win you over, you can see it on the news, she's saying it all the time, "Our generation of women has shared the same experiences," and "I share your concerns."
>
> And you wonder if it's true.
>
> And I want to say, "Oh, kid, it is so not true. She is nothing like you."

That Hillary is nothing like her friend from Massapequa—that she is nothing like most of us and, more important, nothing like what she says she is—is the argument that Noonan distills, beautifully and vividly, in 180 pages.

"God, remember the Hillarys?" Noonan exclaims. "I look at Mrs. Clinton and see the kneesocked girl in the madras headband, the Key Club president who used to walk into the bathroom in Rutherford High School, wrinkle her nose at the tenth-grade losers leaning against the gray tile walls, leave, go down the hall, and mention to a teacher that they're smoking in the girls' room again."

The scandals are recalled more as fables than events; Noonan draws upon them only for the lessons they teach us about Hillary's character. As Noonan notes, nothing she has written here is new. All the pertinent facts about Hillary have been part of the public record for years. And yet despite this public knowledge of her character and actions, "somehow [she] always manages to evade responsibility, and never to pay a serious price. Others do, but not she. Her Teflon is tough; she gets tagged but it never takes. And a year or two after each scandal, when she is asked about it, she tells sympathetic interviewers that it's just so sad what has happened in politics, all the charges and the constant search for scandal. 'It's a highly partisan atmosphere,' she explains. And the stories go away."

Larry Downing/Reuters

Candidate Hillary makes it official in Purchase, N.Y.

Noonan questions everything about Hillary Clinton: her championing of children and the downtrodden; her political "accomplishments"; her judgement; her motives; her loyalty to friends and supporters; even her mannerisms. Having choreographed so many politicians herself, Noonan is aware of the significance—and impact—of the smallest tics. She notices, for example, the First Lady's odd habit of nodding when she means to say no ("No, Dan, I don't think the American people are persuaded by these highly partisan charges") and shaking her head when she means to say yes ("Yes, Dan, I do think the people are responding to my message"). Why does she do this? Though it may be merely "an unconscious quirk," Noonan writes, "I suspect it is deliberate, a way of taking the clarity out of a moment and leaching it of impact."

This deliberate lack of clarity is a Clinton hallmark, but it has marked Hillary throughout her public life, and it occurs for the same reason, Noonan astutely observes, that Hillary's speeches are so "relentlessly boring" and her campaign appearances unfailingly bland—largely taking place at day-care centers or old-folk's homes where she says nothing more controversial than "governments must put children first" or "it's important to protect health care for the elderly."

Hillary's strategy, Noonan concludes, "is to use words not to pierce through the fog of voices and sounds in which we all live but to add to the fog. She is using words not to reveal but to conceal, not to make clear but to confuse." This cultivated blandness and confusion shields her from too much exposure. "If she allows herself to be drawn out about her real philosophy and views, she enters a danger area. . . . She will continue to say nothing because she wants not to explain her stands but obscure them."

As for Hillary's motivations, Noonan believes that the First Lady is driven not so much by a need for power as by a more-acute-than-usual case of boomer narcissism. "The Clintons' generation was the first generation in history in which The Image was actually a huge and pervasive part of life," she writes. Surrounded by pictures and footage celebrating the famous, "*They wanted to be in the picture*. They had hungry egos and they wanted to escape the boring, unimportant places in which they had been born and raised."

But like everything else about them, their ambition turned out to be pervert-

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ed and pathological. Noonan cites an anecdote told to her by a lifelong friend of the Clintons who once traveled on Air Force One with the couple as they returned from a vacation. The Clintons, who had spent the ride slumped distractedly in their seats, came alive and happy only when they stepped off the plane into a cheering throng. "They're going to need a lot of therapy when this is over," Noonan quotes the friend as saying. "They're gonna need help to get them off what they're hooked on."

What's that? Noonan asks.

"The adulation."

Between her larger ruminations on the state of Hillary's soul, and the country's, Noonan will pause to let fly with wicked zingers: "To say the problem with her candidacy is the carpetbagger issue is to miss the point, and to be unkind to carpets." Or, "[Hillary] is—and I never thought I would be able to say this—too corrupt for New York; she is too cynical for the place that gave birth to Tammany Hall."

Noonan herself has lost none of the gifts she possessed when she churned out some of the Gipper's most memorable speeches. She often sounds spookily like Ronald Reagan's disembodied voice. More spookily, she hands this voice to Hillary, in the form of a speech the First Lady should give if she truly cares about the welfare of children. It is a dazzling speech—brave, funny, moving, inspirational—and of course Hillary would never utter a word of it.

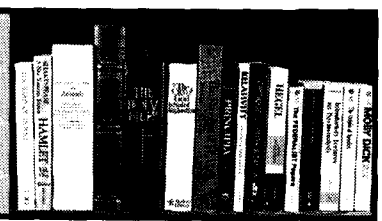
In her most devastating rebuke, Noonan reminds us of the words a young Gore Vidal spoke at the graveside of her heroine, Eleanor Roosevelt: "I guess we're on our own now," meaning, Noonan observes, that modern liberalism had lost its moral leader. In contrast, she imagines the scene at Hillary's graveside: "James turns to Harold and says, 'I hear Mandy's going with Mark Green.'"

This is the core of Noonan's case against Hillary Clinton—and Clintonism in general. It is not simply that the Clintons lied, that they were petty and corrupt, or that they destroyed so many people to save themselves. It's that they squandered the historic opportunity they were given, taking the very finest of what the country had to offer and returning it filthy and stinking, without any expression of shame.

> I thought seven years ago that the Clintons might turn out to be inspiring. . . . The stars were aligned for them when they walked into the White House; they had every opportunity to make enduring progress for their country. . . . And she—a new kind of woman, exemplar of a rising generation—could have been a strong and encouraging presence . . . a "first lady" who is everywhere a figure of respect. . . . Instead they became what they became. . . . The Clintons have damaged our country. They have done it together, in unison, with no apparent care or anxiety about what they have done. And for this reason . . . Clintonism should not be allowed to continue.

The voters of New York now have a choice. As Noonan points out, "that's the great thing about democracy: Before Hillary Clinton gets to decide your future, you get to decide hers." Let's hope they are paying attention. **NR**

SUMMER GREAT BOOKS PROGRAM
FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
July 30 - August 11, 2000



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The two week course includes Sophocles' *Antigone*, the *Crito* of Plato, the *Declaration of Independence*, and readings from *Genesis*, Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Shakespeare, Euclid, Pascal, C.S. Lewis and more.

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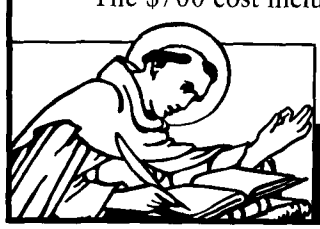

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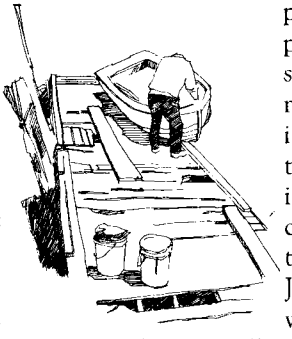
Inner Darkness

RAMESH PONNURU

Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide, by Kay Redfield Jamison (Knopf, 432 pp., $26)

We have lately been deluged with words about mental illness: essays in *The New Yorker* on the experience of recovering from depression; books on causes, symptoms, cures; memoirs of madness by literary giants and dwarves alike. The topic seems to fascinate most people. Most, but not all. Confronted by this tremendous, confused, heartfelt outpouring, conservative intellectuals have mostly responded: Get over it!

Conservatives are not listening to Prozac. The literature of self-revelation strikes them as a failure of reticence on the part of writers, and an invitation to hypochondria for readers. This literature is, for many conservatives, itself symptomatic of a social disease: a "therapeutic culture" that, step by insidious step, is replacing the criteria of morality with those of health.



There is truth in this critique, but it is not the whole truth; and to the extent that conservatives act as though it is, the culture will be deaf to their critique. Conservatives will not get a hearing, that is, until they face up to the reality of mental illness. Reading Kay Redfield Jamison's *Night Falls Fast* would be a good way to start.

Jamison, a professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, is an expert on mental illness. Her book *Touched with Fire* dealt with the peculiar susceptibility of writers, artists, and musicians to manic-depression. Her knowledge of the subject is rooted not only in research and reading but bitter experience: As detailed in her subsequent memoir *An Unquiet Mind*, she herself has suffered from manic-depression and has attempted suicide. In her latest book, she surveys what we know about suicide among the young and middle-aged.

One thing we know, or ought to know, is that it is not rare. Perhaps one in ten fatal shootings by police officers is deliberately provoked by the victim in what has been called "suicide by cop." Jamison writes, "In 1995, more teenagers and young adults died from suicide than died from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, pneumonia, influenza, birth defects, and stroke combined." A survey from the same year found that one in ten college students had seriously considered suicide in the previous year, most having drawn up a plan. Only accidents kill more of them; yet most families don't look at mental-health services at all when picking a college.

Arming a teenager to withstand stress, setbacks, and heartache is not enough. Jamison insists that it is mental illness that causes most suicides: depression, manic-depression, and schizophrenia, all of which often find their victims in young adulthood.

Healthy people, for the most part, can handle the occasional disappointments of life; mental illness can make it difficult to cope with the sunrise. Poets and doctors, like creative and successful people generally, are more prone to mental illness and suicide than most people. It must be especially maddening for people who live by their wits to appear to be losing them; to see their minds, capable of such wonders, turning on themselves. Jamison writes, "Patients who do well socially and academically when young and who then are hit by devastating illnesses such as schizophrenia and manic-depression seem particularly vulnerable to the spectre of their own mental disintegration and the terror of becoming a chronic patient."

That terror may be at its worst when the disintegration is not. Suicide takes too much work when you're curled up in a ball. A little more energy, a little more clarity, makes it possible (and sometimes, a little more cunning, to fool the doctors). Then, too, "the jagged pattern of recovery" often raises hopes and cruelly dashes them. The chronic dread that the illness will return—Poe's "long periods of horrible sanity"—plays "a decisive role in many suicides." So it is not surprising that the smarter and better informed a schizophrenic is, the more likely he is to commit suicide; or that doctors' assessments of hospitalized patients soon to kill themselves are often more upbeat than their assessments of patients who live.

The case studies presented by Jamison are hideous and harrowing. There is Drew Sopirak, who had just

■

The conservative critique of the therapeutic culture will not get a hearing until conservatives face up to the reality of mental illness.

■

graduated from the Air Force Academy when manic-depression struck him down; the explorer Meriwether Lewis, whose suicide is still not squarely faced in all the history books; Margaret Davis King, a Navy veteran and homeless paranoid schizophrenic who broke into the National Zoo a few years ago to be mauled and eaten by lions.

Along the way we learn that, contrary to widespread belief, suicide rates do not increase over holidays, or during the night. That winter is, in every country studied, the sparsest season for suicide (and less remarkably, that Mondays are the peak day for it). That the chief advantage of the new medications that have become so prominent in the '90s is not their greater efficacy but their lower toxicity, making it hard to overdose on them. We read in one chapter about the matter-of-factness often characteristic of suicide notes, in another about the evolutionary psychologists' speculations about the origins of mental illness. And we read briefly about Jamison's intimate familiarity with her subject, which, she confirms, made writing the book emotionally wrenching.

Wide-ranging though her discussion is, Jamison gives short shrift to the social dimension of suicide. She criti-

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cizes our society for not doing enough to prevent it, but she does not delve into the possible reasons for the variance in suicide rates among societies and within societies over time. This is odd, considering that the topic was among the first taken up by sociology (in Durkheim's *Le suicide*). Jamison mentions research suggesting that countries with higher amounts of saturated fats in their diets have higher suicide rates. But there is nothing here about technological modernity, individualism, or even family instability (although she acknowledges that the bonds of family tie some people to life).

The book excludes the elderly so as not to get bogged down in issues such as euthanasia. But Jamison's own reporting suggests that such controversial questions cannot be bracketed off. She notes that Sopirak, in the Air Force Academy, read a textbook called *Moral Issues in Philosophy*; he kept circling and underlining the sentence "There is such a thing as life not worthy to be lived" and another on the existence of "a moral duty to terminate the life of an insane person who is suffering from a painful and incurable disease." Authors can't be held responsible for the effects of their words on disturbed individuals. Still, only a fool would deny that the way we talk about life and death has an effect on the actions of some of us.

Conservatives understand that; it's why they speak of a "culture of death." Theirs is a different blind spot. In conservative writings, one finds casual, unsupported references to Prozac as an unfortunate step toward androgyny, or as a substitute for religious faith. Doubtless there are people taking medication who should not be. But the evidence of the morgue suggests that underdiagnosis and underprescription are by far the greater problems.

The conservative attack on the therapeutic culture could use some more precision. Attention to individual responsibility is a solid conservative theme; but so is the refusal to wish away unpleasant, intractable realities. Coming to terms with mental illness is part of living with the imperfection that is our common inheritance. **NR**

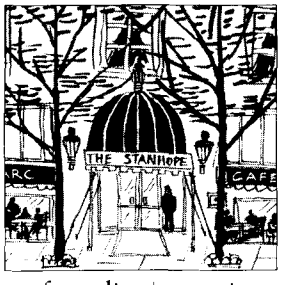
Estranged Bedfellows

KANCHAN LIMAYE

Partisans: Marriage, Politics, and Betrayal Among the New York Intellectuals, by David Laskin (Simon & Schuster, 320 pp., $26)

"THE men wanted slaves and peers, and the women did their damnedest to be smashing in both roles, even if it killed them." This maudlin motif overruns *Partisans*, David Laskin's verbal soap opera about the harrowing private lives of the public intellectuals who produced *Partisan Review*—a magazine founded in 1934 as an organ of the Communist John Reed Clubs and revived in 1937 to combine Stalinist Marxism with the cause of literary modernism.

Laskin, a journalist who has written *A Common Life: Four Generations of American Literary Friendship and Influence* and two obscure histories of American weather, examines the cultural period (1930s–1960s) of the group's heyday through their rocky marriages. Much as Ang Lee's 1997 movie *The Ice Storm* showed how disintegrating marriages were mere rumblings in the gathering countercultural storm of the 1970s, Laskin tries to prove that the traditional man's-work-comes-first model of marriage embraced by the pre-feminist women of *Partisan Review* represented the most repellent aspects of the unliberated 1950s. Outraged, he wonders why these accomplished professional women never tried to gain recognition solely by virtue of their talent, rather than sleeping and marrying their way to the top.



Laskin's book joins a number of similar memoirs, including Alexander Bloom's *Prodigal Sons*, Terry Cooney's *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals*, Norman Podhoretz's *Ex-Friends*, and William Phillips's *A Partisan View*—all of which focused on the group's ideas and arguments, not their personal lives. These books, along with Norman Podhoretz's earlier books, and memoirs by Diana Trilling and Mary McCarthy, have trained us to view the *PR* writers as intellectual heavyweights setting America's—and often the world's—cultural and political agenda: America's answer to Bloomsbury. We don't normally think of these avant-garde intellectuals as a link between John Reed and Jane Fonda, but Laskin shows us the connection by taking us behind the mythos of their high-minded battles into the squalor of their bedrooms. There we find a bunch of infantile characters engaged in childish and disappointing relationships, while Laskin runs aground trying to convince us that the women were smarter than their men.

Laskin takes us behind the mythos of *Partisan Review*'s high-minded battles into the squalor of its bedrooms.

Take Laskin's portrait of novelist and essayist Mary McCarthy and her lover, Philip Rahv, the founding coeditor of *Partisan Review*. Laskin suggests that McCarthy married Rahv in an act of "literary social climbing" and continued in this opportunistic vein with her wife-beating second husband, Edmund Wilson, America's preeminent literary and social critic. Her second marriage ended after a particularly acrid scene in which Wilson refused to take out the garbage. McCarthy slugged him. Wilson slugged her back and she ended up in the hospital. They divorced and rabidly spun self-serving tales to their mutual friends.

Next we meet manic-depressive poet Robert Lowell, who plowed through alcoholic novelist (and fellow Pulitzer winner) Jean Stafford, leaving her a mess in a mental hospital. Later he allowed essayist and critic Elizabeth

Miss Limaye is a New York-based writer for *Reason*, *American Arts Quarterly*, and *The Classicist*.

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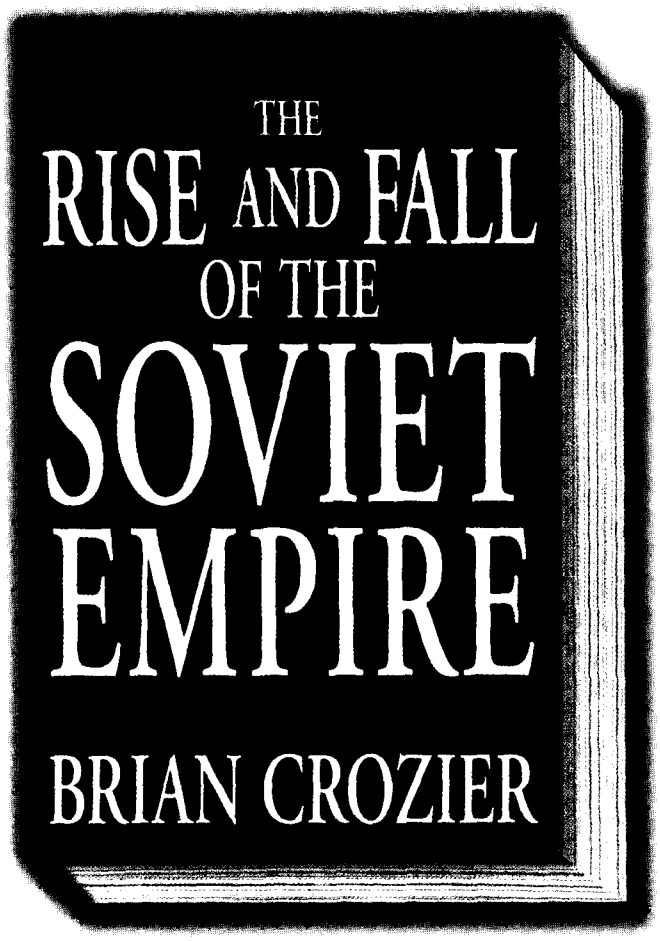

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Hardwick to enchain herself to him, as many other "girls" drifted in and out of his life. These included the glamorous violinist Giovanna Battista, with whom he planned to elope to Italy, and Lady Caroline Blackwood, a neurotic noblewoman who needed a keeper as much as he did. Blackwood became Lowell's third and final wife, forming a partnership that Lowell aptly described as, "I'm manic, she's panic."

While Hardwick tolerated Lowell's sexual excess, Stafford complained of sexual deprivation during Lowell's Catholicism-induced "purification manias," during which he lived like a monk. Much to Hardwick's dismay, she had to live in the same house as Blackwood after Blackwood put in an hysterical performance at Lowell's funeral.

Then there are Hannah Arendt, author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and fellow émigré Heinrich Blucher, who met in Paris and escaped to the United States where their marriage "survived"—barring the minor matter of his multiple affairs and her compulsive flirtations. According to Diana Trilling, Arendt thought that as reigning female intellectual, she had the right to flirt with all the husbands in the room while treating their wives like nonentities. While the thin-skinned Diana was the only Partisan to take her husband's name, she complained that she often felt like a "marital appendage" to her husband, the literary critic Lionel Trilling.

All of this makes for a painfully juicy piece of gossip: the lies, betrayals, drunken brawls, batterings, and nervous breakdowns provoke a horrified addiction in the reader, despite the trite prose in which they are clothed. But Laskin tries too hard to squeeze high drama out of petty incidents of literary backstabbing, weakening his narrative. Too many high-octane phrases like "clandestine rendezvous" and "tense menage" clutter *Partisans* for any actual event to have an impact on the reader. Laskin constantly reminds us that we are reading about the "literary life," that these were "literary wives" in "literary marriages," as though that justified or elevated their infantile behavior.

This battle-of-the-sexes motif grows tediously overwrought by the end of the book. Worse, Laskin perpetuates two tired and dangerous myths: the modernist myth that the only true artist is a crazy one, and the feminist myth that relations between the sexes can be discussed only in the language of power. Thanks to these canards, *Partisans* comes to resemble a grotesquely inferior inversion of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*—an attempt to write about depth with superficiality, rather than vice versa.

Laskin does capture the emotional and ideological mutations each Partisan underwent over the years, and closes the book with tiny stories of their deaths. He thus provides the reader with a God's-eye view of human lifetimes, highlighting the perpetual flux that is their essence. He also offers edifying insight into the world of intellectual magazines, revealing how a publication is often just a group of friends passing around a paper microphone.

In the end, *Partisans* strikes one as a painfully cynical book, mired as it is in the language of gendered power struggles—a book in which "rivalry poisons the atmosphere, smothers one another's flame." Laskin has lifted up the rock of political journalism to show us its underside. But the strange and lurid things that we find crawling there have little bearing on the above-ground lives and ideas of this influential, still-impressive group of former friends. **NR**

■ SHELF LIFE ■

NB: With this issue we revive a feature familiar to longtime readers of NR, *a feature formerly known as "Random Notes" and "The Right Books." In it we will periodically call attention to books both new and old, according to their merits—or sometimes lack thereof—as well as to noteworthy trends in the publishing business.*

THE Intercollegiate Studies Institute is a little press that publishes an amazing number of high-quality conservative titles. ISI's hallmark is to approach intellectually challenging subjects in a style that is accessible to the average intelligent reader, avoiding both dumbing-down and unnecessary jargon. Here are three notable recent titles.

Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law (345 pp., $24.95), edited by Edward B. McLean, assembles 13 essays asking whether law ever has a deeper basis than the mere consent of the governed. The essayists agree that it does: that—in a tradition dating back to ancient Greece—there is a natural law "written on our hearts." A number of contributors discuss the problem in a religious context, but John Jenkins, in his essay on Aquinas, makes the important point that in natural law "the goodness and value of things human . . . are not explicitly dependent" on a particular faith.

In the Clinton era, it is not surprising that a collection of essays on George Washington would focus on issues of character. The essayists of *Patriot Sage: George Washington and the American Political Tradition* (355 pp., $29.95) return repeatedly to Washington's incarnation of republican virtues. In his afterword, NR's Richard Brookhiser summarizes: "George Washington, my psychoanalyst wife observes shrewdly, appeals to small children and to mature adults, but not to adolescents." In an age in which we are all encouraged to act like adolescents, it's understandable that Washington's popularity has waned. But in offering a corrective, this work, edited by Gary L. Gregg II and Matthew Spalding, is much more than a dose of moral castor oil. Mackubin Owens, for example, in one of the volume's best essays, does a wonderful job of rescuing Washington's reputation as a general.

In *Plagues of the Mind: The New Epidemic of False Knowledge* (279 pp., $24.95), classicist Bruce S. Thornton tackles the self-congratulatory notion among moderns that our era, unlike every other, is immune to self-delusive superstitions. Thornton outlines in vigorous, highly entertaining detail how a number of pseudoscientific hoaxes—including the supposed prevalence of goddess-worship in prehistoric Europe—have become important factors in intellectual life, despite having their origins more in wish-fulfillment than in genuine scholarship.

—MICHAEL POTEMRA

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The Ur-Pervert

RANDY ROBERTS

Stroheim, by Arthur Lennig (Kentucky, 514 pp., $30)

In his 1992 book *Hollywood vs. America*, Michael Medved criticized the film industry's penchant for perversion, attacks on religion and the family, glorification of lowlifes and criminals, and the general attitude that "life stinks." But what Medved attacked was nothing new. His list of complaints would have been as valid in the 1920s as it was in the '80s and '90s; indeed the origins of the culture war preceded Dan Quayle and Tipper Gore by 60 or 70 years.

A seminal figure in this incipient conflict between America and Hollywood was Erich von Stroheim, a director who began making films in 1919 and was virtually washed up a decade later. Yet few directors were more important in shaping Hollywood's vision of life. Ironically, most people who remember Stroheim at all think of him first as an actor who represented an older, more courtly era. In Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*, Stroheim played the pilot/commandant Rauffenstein, the German officer who insists that class bonds transcend national ties. Years later in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, Stroheim played Max von Mayerling, the has-been Hollywood director reduced to being Gloria Swanson's butler, chauffeur, and cuckold. Sadly, for Stroheim, Max was less a role than a reflection. By the time he appeared in *Sunset Boulevard*, he was a relic of another age, discarded, largely forgotten, as much a shambles and an oddity as Norma Desmond's empty and echoing mansion.

One line in *Sunset Boulevard* summed up Stroheim's life. Joe Gillis (played by William Holden) tells the faded star, "You used to be big." She shoots back, "I *am* big—it's the pictures that got small." The pictures, yes, and Stroheim would have added, the producers and studios too. In the era before talkies, when famous faces and opulent sets were everything, Stroheim was big—almost as big as his ego. In a brief period sandwiched between minor careers as an actor, he directed numerous over-sized, overwrought films. They were like a fleet of *Titanics*—grand, state-of-the-art, and doomed, reminders of what might have been rather than what was.

Biographer Arthur Lennig approaches Stroheim as a film scholar and fan.

For Stroheim, Hollywood was not so much a place and an industry as a state of mind.

The director/actor fascinated him as a youth, gave him pleasure as a graduate student, and occupied a central position in his professional career. Lennig taught Stroheim to university students, reconstructed his 1922 film *Foolish Wives*, and followed his footsteps across Europe and the United States. *Stroheim* is Lennig's thank-you note to the director, a sympathetic look at Stroheim's career, and a loving tribute to silent films, detailing not only what finally appeared on the screen but also Stroheim's original intent.

Lennig occasionally overstates the freshness of his biographical findings. The fact that Stroheim played fast and loose with the details of his life is hardly news. At some points he would claim he was a product of the Austrian aristocracy and military system: He was the son of a count and a baroness, he said, adding airily, "Titles mean nothing." At other times, he claimed that his father was variously a colonel in the Dragoons, a civil servant, a commanding officer, and so on. As for himself, the crop-haired, stiff-backed Stroheim was apt to explain modestly that he was military through-and-through, badly scarred, you know, behind enemy lines in the Bosnian campaign. But then he would allude to the great mystery—banishment from the army, some family disgrace, or something with a slightly seedy and romantic pulse.

The truth is infinitely more prosaic. Stroheim was born in Vienna in 1885, the son of a modestly successful Jewish hat salesman. A below-average student, he was an above-average daydreamer, and his head was often filled with fantasies of military glory. But his military "career" was brief and inglorious. After less than five months in the transport-and-supply division of the Austrian army, his superiors discharged him. Failure awaited him in civilian life, too: The family business went bankrupt, his father died, and Stroheim boarded a ship bound for America. There he was reborn as a Catholic with an aristocratic "von" added to his name, and more dreams than baggage.

It seems natural that Stroheim would be pulled toward the empire of dreams, a land where self-invention was standard procedure. For him, and many others, Hollywood was not so much a place and an industry as a state of mind, something to be molded to one's fancy. During World War I he had become an actor, the Prussian militarist Americans "love[d] to hate" in anti-Hun propaganda films. In one memorable scene from

Mr. Roberts, a professor of history at Purdue University, is author, with James S. Olsen, of *John Wayne: American*.

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The Heart of Humanity, he threw a baby out of a window before turning on the child's mother. When the war ended, and the demand for his "type" disappeared, he convinced Carl Laemmle, head of Universal Studios, to allow him to direct. His first film, *Blind Husbands*, a critical and commercial success, launched Stroheim's directorial career.

It was a career that burned brightly and fast. Between 1919 and 1932 he directed nine films, most plagued by problems. Profligacy and perfectionism were his twin vices. He spent the studio's money with reckless abandon and seemed to think no detail or scene too insignificant to show on screen. The result was expensive films that were indecently long. *Foolish Wives* originally ran 32 (12-to-14-minute) reels, *The Wedding March* more than 30 reels, and *Greed* an insane 42 reels. Several generations before Michael Cimino shocked Hollywood and sank United Artists with his epic mismanagement and wild extravagance in *Heaven's Gate*, Stroheim appealed to "art" to mask his wastefulness. His bosses responded by cutting his films—two were significantly butchered, two others more benignly shortened—then by employing other directors to finish his films, and finally by ending his career. In the end, studio executives simply asserted their power and fired the miscreant director.

Lennig tends to view Stroheim as a persecuted, self-destructive artist, along the lines of D. W. Griffith and Orson Welles. Actually, he was more of an irresponsible employee. But what of the films he made? *Greed*, based on Frank Norris's novel *McTeague*, is considered an American masterpiece, although three-fourths of what Stroheim intended was cut out. The film, the story of McTeague's decline from dentistry to death, is unremittingly bleak, moving from alcoholism to murder, with examinations of sadism, masochism, and other forms of physical and emotional violence along the way. Stroheim's cut of the film ran over eight hours, the visual equivalent of, well, eight hours in a dentist's chair without benefit of Novocaine. The film was mercifully cut, though it still managed to appall its audiences.

Later critics would judge Stroheim's unblinking look at American degradation, ugliness, dishonesty, poverty, and meanness a great artistic achievement. However, his earlier films set in Europe were more visually striking and intellectually satisfying. *Blind Husbands* and *Foolish Wives* capture the mood of post–World War I disillusionment and the counterfeit nature of the European aristocracy. But even his early films contain signs of Stroheim's eventual ruin.

Lennig believes that Stroheim was a serious and significant artist who boldly infused movies with modern notions of reality. If he means that Stroheim was intent on exploring offbeat sexual relations, the dark side of humanity, and the crippled nature of modernity, certainly Stroheim was a realist. But his was the realism of a Marquis de Sade.

For example, *Queen Kelly*, the film he worked on in 1928 and 1929 with Gloria Swanson as both star and producer, involves a mad queen who rambles about her palace stark naked save for a strategically held cat; a young woman in a convent who throws her underpants at the queen's fiancé; and a drunken prince, who catches and sniffs them. From there the film turns slowly left toward kinky. Champagne, oysters, whippings—standard bizarre stuff, at first. But then Stroheim brings in the heavy guns. Kelly, the convent girl played by Swanson, runs off to Dar es Salaam to tend a dying aunt who runs a brothel. There she is forced to marry a wealthy, crippled, hand-wringing, salivating planter. The marriage takes place over the body of the dying aunt, aided by a priest who administers both the nuptials and last rites. The aunt dies, Kelly says "I do," and the brothel has a new madam. Of course, all eventually ends well and Kelly becomes the prince's queen.

According to Lennig, "Stroheim was one of the first directors to create a believable, non-Victorian woman, one who was good but also had physical desires." But Stroheim's tabloid scenarios and bundle of strange fetishes belied his calls for realism. In the end, as in the beginning, what Stroheim represented was a lie. Stroheim rebelled against Victorianism and put something tawdry in its place, simultaneously both setting and lowering a standard, and thereby helping to usher the new age into Hollywood. Calling this celebration of perversity "realism" misses the meaning of Stroheim's career. **NR**

■ FILM ■

Science Friction

JOHN SIMON

THERE is nothing strange about a film having been written by four scenarists—in this case, Garry Shandling, Michael Leeson, Ed Solomon, and Peter Tolan. What is strange is that the four of them—not to mention the distinguished director, Mike Nichols—couldn't come up with something better than ***What Planet Are You From?***

On a distant planet (unnamed in the film, so I'll call it X), where cloning has replaced birth, and there are only men with atrophied penises and no women, the plan is to colonize Earth. But the conquest must come from within, for which reason someone must impregnate an Earth woman. (If this makes no sense to you, that makes two of us.) A sinister bigwig, Graydon (Ben Kingsley), is training an academy of uniformed males in how to seduce Earth women by, among other things, complimenting them on their shoes and then proposing marriage. The best student, renamed Harold Anderson and supplied with a phony vita, is dispatched to Phoenix, Arizona, and immediately acquires a high-echelon job in a bank.

You'd think that X, with such earthly expertise, could have picked someone more seductive than Shandling, and given him better seduction strategies than ones that earn him nothing more than a slap in the face. After many failures, he hooks up with Perry (Greg Kinnear), an adulterous officemate, who will fix him up. That the great technology on X could supply Harold only with a male organ that, in erection, rattles like a tin lizzie being revved up is as amazing as that the women fall for him anyway.

Even more preposterous is the way Harold and Graydon infiltrate Earth, through their spaceship's quasi-collision with a commercial plane, in whose lavatory they materialize. Later meetings between them take place similarly, with

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Graydon exiting through the toilet bowl.

It seems to me that valid science fiction, after an initial leap of faith, must adhere to some kind of logic or consistency. Here nothing makes even minimal sense. Even the business of Perry's taking Harold to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for easy pickups is a steal from *Fight Club*, and the business of exploiting the fragile egos of struggling AA members for easy conquests is pretty unsavory.

Here Harold picks up Rebecca, the stewardess who had originally slapped him. More or less frigid, she nevertheless goes to bed with him now, though barely uncrossing her legs. When the married man she really craves calls up when she and Harold are in flagrante, our hero is unceremoniously kicked out. Finally, he connects with Susan (Annette Bening), a touching young AA member, now sincerely seeking marriage and motherhood. He marries her, wanting, at first, nothing but a baby-supplier. Slowly, however, he begins to care for her. There are minor roadblocks, as when Perry's sexy but neglected wife, Helen (the terrific Linda Fiorentino), makes a play for him. Also major setbacks, as when he abducts his baby to Planet X, only to promptly repent.

■

Annette Bening gives a superb performance, but is this enough to recommend an otherwise inane movie?

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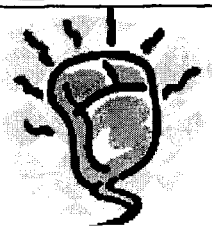
And all this doesn't even include an important subplot in which a blowhard FAA agent (John Goodman) comically pursues Harold but cannot stop his jealous wife, who does not believe in extraterrestrials except as cover-ups for marital infidelity, from leaving him. Nichols says what drew him to this project was that it is really about "the different things men and women want," i.e., sex versus commitment. But if that is what interests you, you don't allow half the film to be sci-fi, and so absurd as to undercut the supposedly real half. And you know better than to have a stand-up comic and lousy actor play your hero, even if he is the producer.

Annette Bening gives a superb performance, totally wasted on this trash. She again plays a real-estate agent, as in the dismal *American Beauty*, in which she overacted ridiculously. Here she is warmly, vulnerably, heart-meltingly real, and you want her to get someone much better than Shandling. But is this enough to recommend an otherwise inane movie? Which raises the question of what are a fine actress and able director to do when the choice is between a lot of garbage and no work at all, which seem to be, more and more, the prevailing options? For that, I have no answer, only tears.

■ Jasmin Dizdar, a Bosnian filmmaker living in London, has come up with ***Beautiful People***, a film so dazzling and dizzying that I feel rash to review it after just one seeing. It concerns four families, British and Bosnian, whose intersecting lives make for farce and satire, sadness and anguish, a carousel of carefree-ness, carelessness, and caring. The characters are so numerous, the crosscutting so rapid, the situations so bizarre, the editing so elliptical as to require utmost, but never unrewarded, concentration.

Connections can be made only gradually, but the very confusion makes dramatic and philosophical contributions. The survey here is from upper-crust to lower-class, from the benighted to the sentient, from Croat to Serb. Only briefly does the action move to war-torn Bosnia, but the offhanded horror—comic if it were not so dreadful—makes a huge impact. Throughout, suffering verges on grotesquery, madness, and absurdity, as when two ethnic adversaries, wounded and hospitalized, still keep fighting, and the British nurse admonishes, "You're here to heal, not to fight. So start healing." There is a strange, detached sympathy, or sympathetic detachment, and Dizdar's language is as penetrating as his direction.

Shot with astringence by Barry Ackroyd, this film boasts a large, multinational cast, which forms an ensemble as seamless as it is internecine. Some here may be amateurs, but as good as professionals, even as the professionals cannily pass for just plain people, sometimes even beautiful. Watching *Beautiful People* is to descend into a maelstrom of the sublime and the ridiculous and emerge, if such a thing can be, richer and wiser. **NR**



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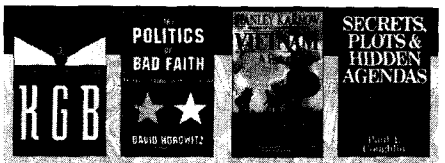

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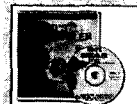

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■ CITY DESK ■

Urban Crunch

RICHARD BROOKHISER

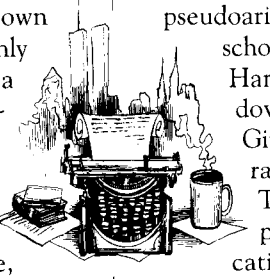
THE taxi is a Manhattan vehicle. In other cities, cabs nest at the airports and hotels, and in a few they go through the motions of cruising. But it is hard to flag them, while in the cities of the Sun Belt, where driver's licenses are among the rights of man, they hardly exist.

In a century, the language of internal-combustion-engine cabs will be as foreign as the language of horse-drawn vehicles now is. In classic 19th-century fiction, Mr. Darcy is always helping Becky Sharpe into his hansom, when who should pass in a spanking new cabriolet but Archdeacon Grantly. I only recently realized that "brougham" is a one-syllable word. In a new anthology of fiction from *The New Yorker*, Ann Beattie refers in a 1977 story to a "Checker." Soon that will require a footnote.

The Checker company, headquartered in Kalamazoo, Michigan, went out of business in the early '80s. It made the most commodious taxis in history. The sturdy London Morrises were small by comparison. Even stretch limos, with trashy cut-glass decanters on the wet bar and blinking window lights, have less headroom. I am 6'4"; in a Checker I could wear a fedora and stretch my legs without touching the back of the driver's seat. With two people on the passenger seat, and two more on the pill-shaped jump seats, you could have a cozy game of bridge. Once the plant shut down, the Checkers began disappearing through attrition. The papers ran eulogies when the last one went out of service. In the standard taxi of today, a mid-sized Ford, a person of any size has to sit with knees wrenched to one side, à la Sharon Stone. When I emerge from a long ride, I feel like my 20-year-old wedding corsage, pressed between the pages of the *OED*.

It was long a staple of lazy reporters—or of lazy humorists mocking reporters—to present colloquies with taxi drivers, in which the cabbie vouchsafed some pearl of populist wisdom. You don't get many such answers from cabbies these days, because most of them come from some other populace, usually from Lahore. They can ask unexpected questions, though. One cabbie wondered if my wife, decked out in odd finery, belonged to a religious order. Only the order of Iskander. Another asked us, "Where does love come from? From the head, from the heart, or from the god?" I forget what we said.

Cabdrivers are an artifact of urban pseudoaristocracy. Most Americans own their own cars. Especially poor Americans: They typically own nine, all parked in the yard; only the newest works. But owning a car in Manhattan is as expensive as renting another apartment. The subways are efficient, but there are times when you just don't want to be a rush-hour Orpheus. Hence, the temporary car and driver. You sit, they work; for 20 blocks, they are your servants.



Middle-class city life is filled with stop/start feudalism of this kind. The butler in his cutaway is almost extinct; the liveried servant totally so. But every middling rental-apartment building in Manhattan has a helpful man at the door, wearing a jacket he would never buy for his own use; in older co-ops, he wears a hat. Maids used to be found wherever the ambitious middle class flourished: Mr. and Mrs. Bridge had one. But maids have disappeared—except from the homes of New York professionals, where once a week a woman from the Caribbean comes to clean. When Zoe Baird, Bill Clinton's first choice for attorney general, was going down because of unmade Social Security payments to the help, Upper East and West Sides united in sympathy. What was the lady supposed to do, eat dust bunnies? All across the broad bosom of the republic, amateur Sunday handymen apply their own coats of base paint, install their own brackets, and unblock their own drains. In the city, these tasks are performed by Hispanic porters, directed by Balkan supers. And when it comes time to eat dinner, and wives have been too busy to cook and bachelors open their refrigerators and find only beer, they all go out to restaurants, where actors and novelists assume the temporary roles of waiters and waitresses.

■

Part of the reason we work so hard is to pay for amenities that elsewhere would be less expensive.

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Then, if the professional urbanite has children to be educated, comes the true pseudoaristocratic splurge—private school, the midtown Etons and Harrows, the side-street Andovers and Exeters. Mayor Giuliani, who cut the murder rate and drove porn out of Times Square, cannot improve the Board of Education. So private schools flourish by providing a guarantee that your child will not be slashed with a box cutter and will learn who Columbus was. Given curriculums these days, your child will learn that he was a genocidal maniac, but that is another problem.

We could do most of it for ourselves. 'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free. We could even order McGuffey readers and homeschool. We don't, because we're too busy working. But part of the reason we work so hard is to pay for amenities that elsewhere would be less expensive. Hence the treadmill of expense, and anxiety. And what, Lady Bracknell, could be more 19th century than hard-up aristocrats? **NR**

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Taiwan As Metaphor

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 25

WELL, now it is staring us in the face, and although Peking's current threat is four days old, still we have not heard from the presidential candidates in precise language what the president should do. We are hearing from Peking, in words ostensibly directed to Taiwan, but inescapably challenging to us: "Do not dawdle, in your election campaign in Taiwan, on the question of a separate nation. Taiwan belongs to China." Those elections are in March. If they do not result in an agenda for reunification, Peking says it will take matters into its own hands.

The subject was discussed recently in a symposium in *Commentary* magazine. There this participant observed that in facing the Taiwan issue we need to steel ourselves against the temptation to retroactive remedies. About once every two years, beginning in 1962, I have counseled a foreign policy that would encourage Taiwan to declare its independence of the mainland. I learned how adamantly secession was opposed by Taiwan on my first visit there in 1962, and still opposed—though with less than unanimity—when I was last there in 1992 on my fourth visit. Although it violates my rule against retrospective improvisation, I nevertheless observe that if we had succeeded in the 1960s in persuading the Taiwanese to take progressive steps to detach from China—seminars, rallies, plebiscites, declarations of independence, applications to the United Nations—the gestation of a democratically governed independent state of 22 million people, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of their intentions, and unfurling their own flag, would have considerably hampered Chinese irredentism.

But what we have here is a critical problem. The China of the new millennium is making its claims with a standby arsenal of nuclear weapons and missiles and is now asserting jurisdictional sovereignty over an island that a) it says belongs to China, b) is acknowledged by Taipei as belonging to China, and c) is acknowledged by successive United States governments as a province of China, whatever the peculiarities of a Chinese province that governs itself, has its own army and navy, and pledges not to submit to the political authority of Peking until there is a change of government of counterrevolutionary dimension.

Still, we are "pledged"—to use the language of a political season—to the qualified defense of Taiwan. It is fair to ask then the question: What will the foreign policy to which we subscribe do if the day comes when Peking issues an ultimatum? Peking might say that at the end of the then current month—say, one month after the Taiwan elections—Taipei must disband its military forces and receive a delegation from Peking which will immediately, upon landing, take effective control of the government.

We all know that the object of statecraft is to abort crisis, and so far this has worked—Taiwan is self-governed and we are at peace with China. But the moment looms when Peking, confident of its resources and of its cause, can look us in the face and ask: Do you want Taiwan so badly as to countenance a nuclear bomb on Honolulu? Are they saying anything different from that, notwithstanding the susurrations of the State Department?

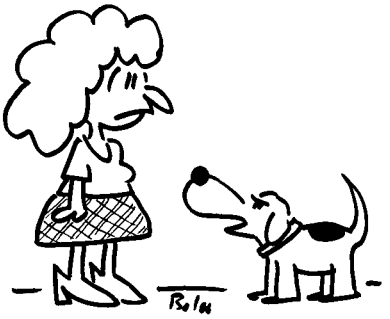
It is unlikely that any of the contenders will recommend adamant denials to Peking. The prospect of a nuclear confrontation with China is, as they used to say during the Cold War, unthinkable. So what then do we do? Devise a means of backing off from our pledge, in the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, to defend Taiwan?

Before forsaking that commitment our president and presidential candidates should give thought to the wobbly American word. And we need to remind ourselves that there are other Taiwans here and there about the globe, little Kuwaits we are pledged prospectively to defend.

Shifty language can be useful in diplomatic tender, but in ultimate situations it is the generator of crisis, not of apocalypse. The State Department in mid November gave out the word that we would consider ending our blockade of Yugoslavia if there were free elections, *even if these renewed the mandate of Milosevic*. The same president who okayed *this* compromise had told us a year ago that Milosevic is this day-and-time's equivalent of Hitler. So if Hitler is democratically reaffirmed, Hitler becomes okay?

Or was "Hitler" just an inappropriate metaphor?

What are other inappropriate metaphors hanging around? Our commitment to Taiwan?



"Sure, you give me food and shelter, but what about my education?"

Well, What Do You Know!

NEW YORK, MARCH 3

THE bill in the House passed by a vote of—can you stand the suspense? —422–0. This is the bill, sponsored most prominently (in the senior body) by Sen. Chuck Grassley, called the Social Security Earnings Test Elimination Act. If passed also by the Senate, the act will eliminate the surcharge on Americans who choose to work from age 65–69. As things now stand, for every $3 over $17,000 earned by a worker in that age group, $1 in Social Security income is forfeited.

Now what is interesting is not that the bill has passed unanimously in the House. It is that we are talking about a measure originally passed during the Depression. The Depression was 70 years ago. Question: Why did it require 70 years to amend a provision so lousy that reform brought unanimity yesterday? If it was so obvious that the measure was wrong and discriminatory, why wasn't a bill introduced to remedy the situation a year ago? Ten years ago? Fifty years ago?

The "reason" for introducing it in the first instance is that the design, in those bad days, was to get people out of the labor market on the grounds that, with unemployment up around 25 percent, a reduction in the jobless figure by any means was desirable. The satisfying way to reduce unemployment is for people to get jobs. But the New Deal fancied illusory cuts to desirable ends: Get people who are 65 to stop working, so they can give their jobs to younger people who are not working—a circular but statistically satisfactory way of reducing the number of jobless.

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Sen. Grassley now uses mostly utilitarian arguments for his reform: 1) There isn't any serious unemployment. 2) To punish people at age 65–69 is to deprive the United States of many skilled workers. 3) Enhanced longevity brings a different perspective on work at ages 65–69. It might once have been thought cruel to expect people of that age to work. Today the problem is different. It is to keep avenues open for the elderly who choose to work.

Now all those fine utilitarian arguments are convincing, but one commentator last week cut through the whole question by citing an epiphany. Suddenly it had occurred to the legislators that to punish older people was—unfair!

If the legislators are going to come on to the question of fair/unfair, they can have a very long and productive run. The dominant abuse is, of course, the question of the income tax. Is it fair to tax some people at nothing, others at 39.6 percent? Obviously those whose standard of living is very low are legitimate beneficiaries of one or another form of negative income tax. But no light is shed on why a society should choose to levy double the tax on one level of earners over against another. The flat tax so vigorously promoted by Steve Forbes is quietly championed by others, but doesn't arrive at the level of, say, gay rights. The utilitarian defense of steep progressive taxes is queasily made, because high exposure to high taxes brings convoluted stratagems of self-protection, which diminish capital flexibility and encourage dissipation of resources and even expatriation.

It is by no means inconceivable that the burgeoning paradox between the Fourteenth and Sixteenth Amendments will one day gestate into public view. The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees equal treatment under the law. The Sixteenth Amendment authorizes unequal treatment under the law.

In high presidential season it would be fine to invite philosophical examination of the question. If you agree that there should be no penalty against 65-year-olds, why should there be a penalty against millionaires?

That is a provocative formulation. It is fine to tax the millionaire proportionately. To tax him disproportionately is abusive government activity. Candidates who decline to get on the justice bandwagon could at least tell us why it took Congress 70 years to move in with a reform, which, when they studied it, they recognized as so manifestly desirable they voted for it unanimously.

Unscrambling Pinochet

NEW YORK, MARCH 7

Now Chile is, not up in arms, one notes gratefully, but in Chile there is protracted the confusion that has surrounded the Pinochet business for 16 months. Outgoing president Eduardo Frei, the Christian Democratic leader, is, again, not *quite* up in arms over the reception given to the returning general by the Chilean military. In deference to Mr. Frei's loud objections, the chief commander of the army welcomed Pinochet back to Chile, but did not give a speech of welcome. Thus are diplomatic problems surmounted.

Meanwhile there have been endless references to the springiness of Mr. Pinochet—a wonder, what release from house arrest does for old bones! The insinuation is, of course, clear, namely that the old man escaped from Great Britain by a feigned illness and dispossession of the senses, a practice explicitly condemned, among other places, in the military code. ("Doctor, I'm afraid I can't join tonight in the assault on enemy lines, I have a terrible cough.") Phony illnesses are not too easy to pull off if skeptically examined by medical doctors who are in the service of prosecutors standing by to make history. Granted, we can imagine Britain's Jack Straw whispering to the examiners: For gawdssake, find Pinochet unable to stand trial, the diplomatic hailstorm going on is intolerable.

But the assumption has to be that Gen. Pinochet was indeed too weakened to take resourceful care of himself at court. But that on landing, after 16 months, in his own country, he summoned the strength to walk with the aid of a cane. Gen. Pinochet is renowned for greater exertions than these.

Mrs. Thatcher, in her unique way, expressed what is thought the conservative view of things by twice calling on the detained general, protesting the entire judicial maneuver. And then, upon his departure, sending him a gift on the airplane of a copy of a 400-year-old silver plate celebrating the victory of Sir Francis Drake over the Spanish Armada. He too, Mrs. Thatcher seemed to be saying, was unloved and unappreciated by his countrymen and their court, but we know now what to think about the valiant Drake.

Conservatives have a sticky time with the Pinochet problem, but on one point they are indisputably correct. It is that if Gen. Pinochet had been serving the other side in modern history, he would have been untouched by the British courts. One has only to try to imagine the arrest in London of Fidel Castro or Mikhail Gorbachev or almost any leader of a Near East country to acknowledge the anomaly. Pinochet's prosecutors are primarily those who resent it that he prevailed over Salvador Allende. Allende was in life, their hero; in death, their martyr.

Having said as much, conservatives have a problem automatically dismissing the assertion of justice in an international setting. Always there need to be procedural safeguards, and the United States has consistently declined to uphold the authority of other jurisdictions than our own for political crimes.

Now those with the brief against Pinochet were arguing that the Treaty of Rome of 1998 gave jurisdiction to signatory powers to apprehend and try anyone allegedly guilty of crimes against humanity. A broad term, but applicable to Gen. Pinochet, if the facts are correctly stated, and they are difficult to deny.

The distinction needed, in his case, is always to ask whether his victims were casualties of a revolution, revolutions in most cases being sharply in contrast with the bloodless revolution of Great Britain in 1688. When insurgents assert power there is almost always carnage at an executive level. The question always to ask, when passing judgment on dictators who came to power by the use of force, is: Did their use of force extend beyond the requirements of civil order and security for the revolutionary state?

Here is where Gen. Pinochet, in the judgment of reasonable historians, fails. The coup was in September 1973. There was resistance and it was quelled. But as early as that October, a representative of the International Movement of Catholic Jurists gave evidence of torture. Gen. Pinochet denied this then, and perhaps the evidence was slanted. And as the years went by (he did not resign until 1989), the need to use force to stay in power diminished, to the point that Pinochet himself presided over a return to democratic government.

If the whole of the case rested on tendentious justice, conservatives who stand up for Pinochet would be vindicated. But why should conservatives oppose the very idea of making it difficult for foreign tyrants to travel about nonchalantly from country to country? Mengistu and Idi Amin are offensive enough living freely in Zimbabwe and Saudi Arabia, but do we want them to live their lives care free?

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

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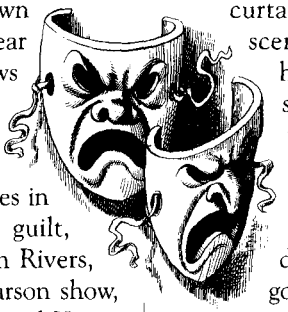
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

THIS past February's miniseries, *Sally Hemings: An American Scandal*, marked a turning point in race-based entertainment. It arrived on television with almost no fanfare, did well enough but broke no ratings records, inspired no agonized debates, and raised no fears of ensuing riots.

What a difference 23 years makes. When *Roots* premiered in 1977, the streets were deserted every night it aired, and you could walk down an apartment hallway and hear it coming from every TV. News shows ran footage of grim-faced patrons in Harlem bars watching the whipping scene, pundits tied themselves in masochistic knots of white guilt, and a resolutely upbeat Joan Rivers, guest-hosting the Johnny Carson show, kept count of the babies named Kunta Kinte and Kizzy born in L.A. hospitals.



I did not expect a rash of newborn Sallys; the name is as "out" as out can be in today's world of Meaghans and LaToyas. But otherwise the silence is deafening.

Less than two years ago we were roiling in controversy over the DNA report that a "Jefferson male" fathered Sally's last child, Eston Hemings. When the story broke, the Monticello Association closed ranks, traditionalist Jefferson scholars turned cartwheels attributing paternity to his brother or nephews, and the morning shows bristled with Hemings descendants, including a white one seeking her 15 minutes of blackness.

Now comes the definitive movie treating the affair as established fact, and there's not a peep out of anybody. How come the ho-hum?

It might be our notorious attention span: Having taken in the original DNA news, we are now in "been there, done that" mode.

It might be the power of foregone conclusions, which work in not-so-mysterious ways. About three weeks before the new miniseries aired, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation quietly admitted that Jefferson probably did father all of Sally's children. It was an uncharacteristic move; ancestral societies are famously inflexible, but with the movie in the can they no doubt decided that it was pointless to go on denying the story in the face of American neo-Cartesianism: It's on TV, therefore it is.

My own theory is that the movie was too good for its own good. It drew the curtain of charity over the sex scenes to keep traditionalists happy, yet contained enough surprises and Catch-22's to thwart the guilt-ridden white liberals and race-card-playing black activists who participate in the overwrought debates that get controversies going. There is something here to neutralize everybody.

It opens with a subtle but effective touch. *Sally Hemings: An American Scandal* cleverly employs a subtitle that de-emphasizes the racial aspect and establishes a certain national affection for the heroine reminiscent of the English attitude toward Nell Gwynn. It's as if a collective historical voice were saying, "A good sort was our Sally." Not exactly the kind of white attitude that Al Sharpton & Co. groove on.

The script contains three literary elements, all well done: satire, irony, and parody. The satire rears its head in a bent *Roots* moment. Once again we see a newborn baby held up in the air, but instead of the slave father lifting it up to a starry sky and sonorously intoning, "Behold the only thing greater than yourself," a midwife does the honors in broad daylight as the baby's slave grandmother shrieks, "What color is it?" and Sally's slave brother replies, "White as snow!"

The irony finds that elusive balance between incongruity and believability. Sally, who was taught to read by Jefferson, reads his own words back to him from the essay in which he expresses his distaste for blacks' physicality and his belief that they are intellectually inferior. Ignoring his pleas to stop, she presses on, until he shouts, "You're taking it out of context!" Jostled by the familiar modern phrase, we glimpse the spectacle of a Founding Father trying to spin his way out of a gaffe.

The parody disarms attempts to identify the politics of the moviemakers. The parodied figure is James Callender, the gossip-mongering newspaperman who first broke the scandal in 1802. The film Callender is obnoxious enough to please the most conservative media-hater, yet he is played with a touch of prissiness and a soft, smiley way of speaking certain to please the most liberal Ken Starr-hater. This is not the stuff of lively debates; mouthy commentators would shut off in mid-sentence once they realized what they had gotten themselves into.

The Washington assignation goes far to explain why the movie caused no stir. No proof exists that Sally was ever in Washington, but no proof exists that she wasn't, so to give the story movement the screenwriter takes artistic license and has Martha Jefferson eject Sally from Monticello, whereupon she turns up at the White House and spends the night with her presidential lover. The next morning, his secretary knocks at the bedroom door to remind him of his appointment with a waiting ambassador, but Jefferson says, "Tell him I will be at least another hour" and climbs back into bed with a drowsily smiling Sally.

This is déjà vu at its stun-gun best, triggering the time-traveling viewer's memory of that future day when another president and his inamorata let a foreign dignitary cool his heels while they had at it. Naturally nobody wanted to talk about this movie. It's the "been there, done that" of Clinton Fatigue.

But you can't keep a good neurosis down. Trained in displacement and projection by years of code words, we have found a way to talk about Tom and Sally after all. It's called "deploring the ban on interracial dating at Bob Jones University," and everybody has put in his two cents' worth.

The results are in, and it's unanimous. All Americans approve of interracial dating, so now our attention span can flit on to Protestants vs. Catholics, which is so old it's new. It's been ages since we've been there and done that. **NR**

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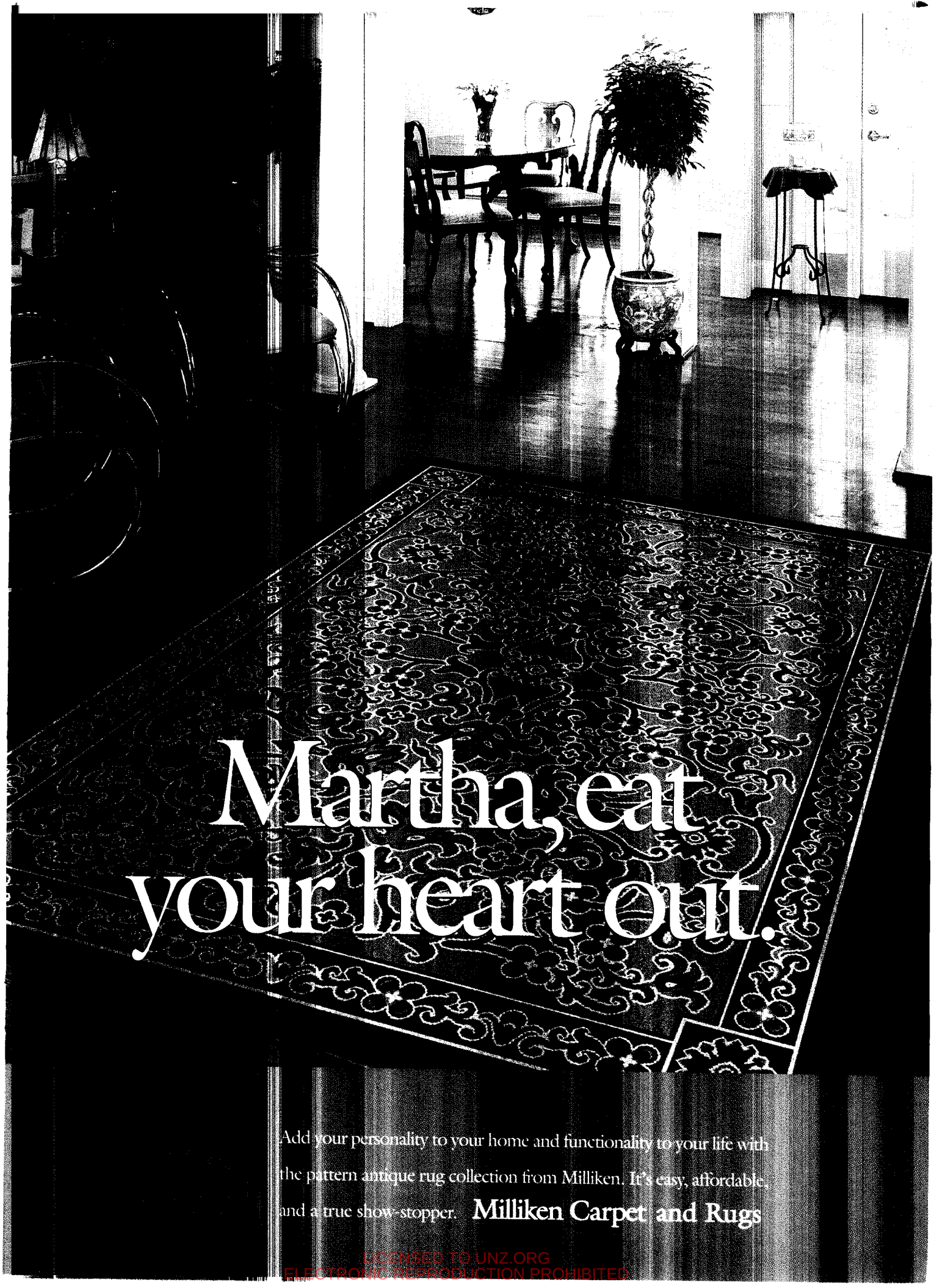
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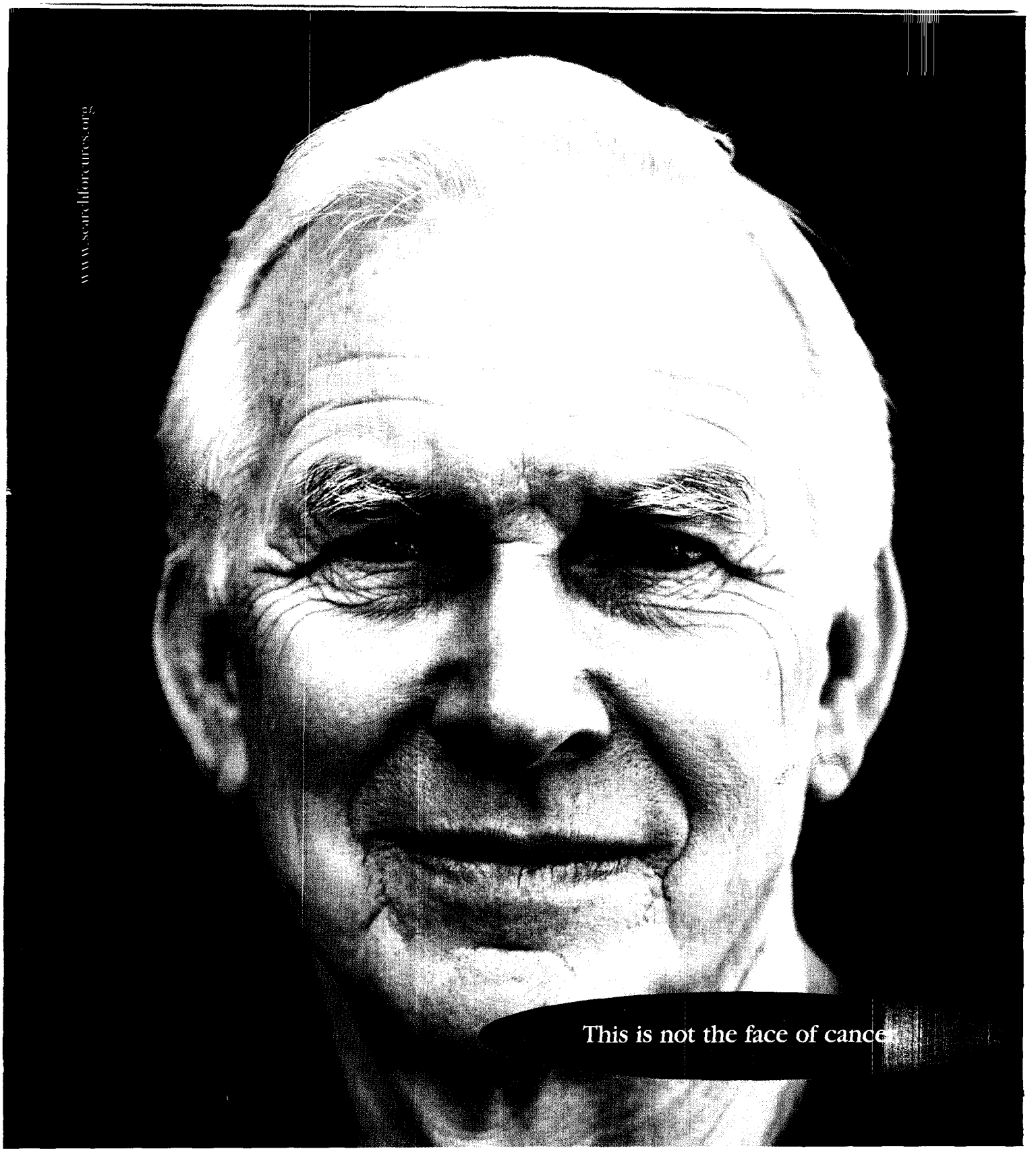

It's the face of William Bantz. Farmer, father and an obsessive do-it-yourselfer. At 73, he has lived with prostate cancer for six years. And he relies on help from advanced medicines developed by America's pharmaceutical companies to keep him free of symptoms. More people are surviving prostate cancer than ever before. But pharmaceutical company researchers won't give up until there is a cure. So people like William Bantz can keep on planning, dreaming and building for the future.

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